

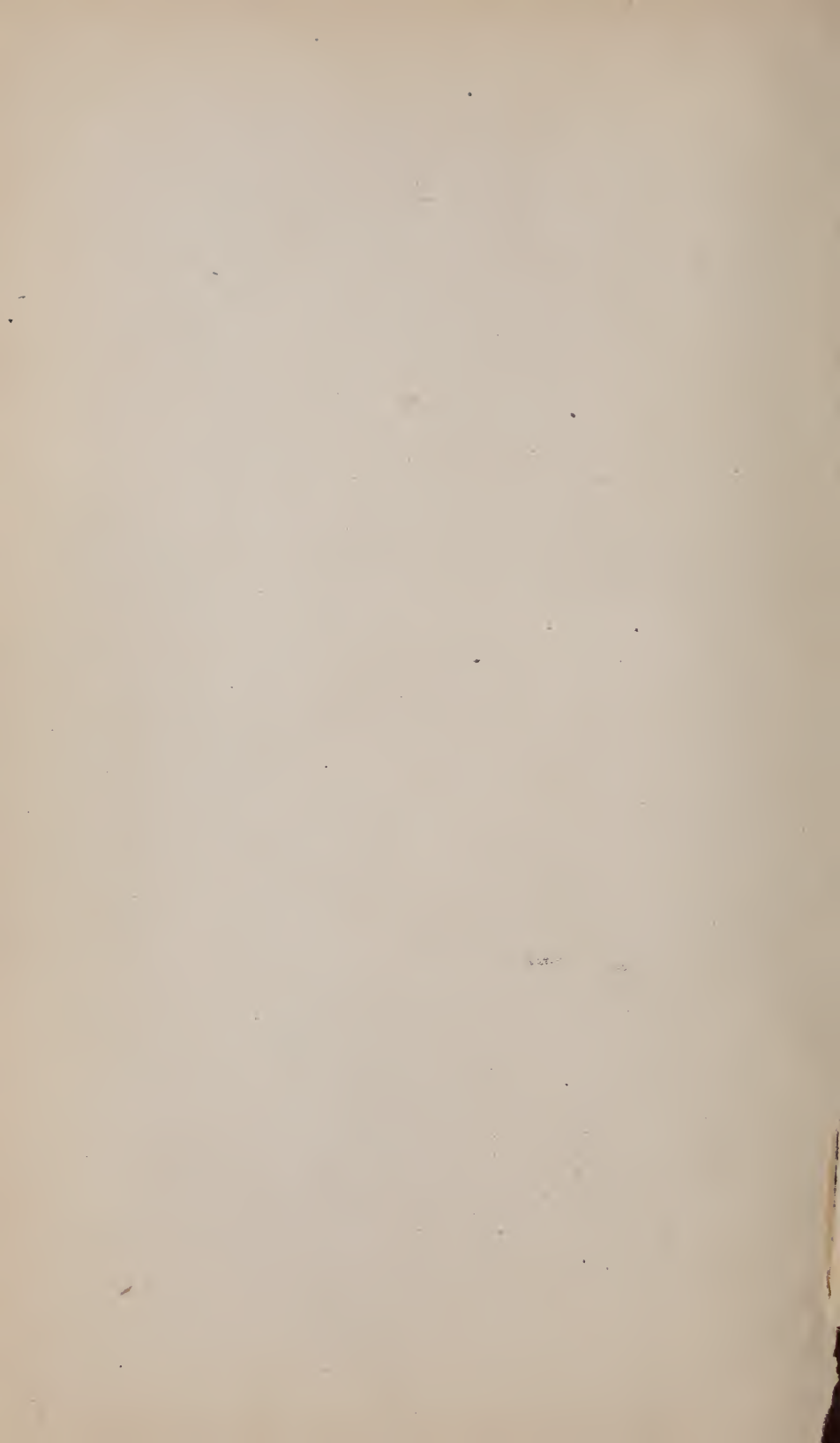
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COME:

THE INSPIRING WORD OF GRACE,

SUPPLEMENTED BY

A SERMON

ON THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST,

EXHIBITING

The Fearful Import of a Refusal of Grace.

By REV. W. O. OWEN.

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.”—ISAIAH.

“And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”—GENESIS.

LANCASTER, PA.:
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PREFACE.

The following book was prepared from the outlines of a discourse preached several years ago by the author. Although traces of its origin are still visible in its pages, even after the utmost care taken to dress it in a style becoming the rank it now assumes, its thoughts are, nevertheless, new and fresh, as most of it was written during the process of publication. Its old bones, like those in Ezekial's vision, are knit together with new sinews, are clothed with new flesh, and the whole system is animated with new life.

This book is intended to supply a local want. The author desires to have the principles he regularly teaches thrown into such a form that they may be studied with deliberation. Hence, this book, clothed in an easy and popular style, is intended for the people and to supplement the pulpit.

In this connection he would suggest that the press, instead of being the exclusive privilege of great genius, should be, more generally, associated with ministerial work. Much valuable labor wasted in the delivery of sermons would, in this way, be saved. Could an exact copy of the impression a sermon made on even the most intelligent part of an audience be secured, it would scarcely be recognized by the minister as his own production. It would probably want the very thoughts he prized the most; it would be such a mutilation of what he so carefully prepared by the midnight lamp as to be almost a burlesque on writing beautiful thoughts for the pulpit; and, exhibiting the mere shreds of a closely woven argument, it would afford him a fair specimen of the terrible waste his best efforts must suffer in delivery. The hearer cannot digest in forty minutes what engaged the minister's thoughts for a week. Hurried on by the delivery, he must, of course, skip over those parts which must be studied at leisure. The minister should then be free to use the press to give permanence to his thoughts. Why should he apolo-

gize for writing even an inferior book when he can preach an inferior sermon with the greatest impunity?

Considerable space in this book has been devoted to "The Bride's Call," and "The Hearer's Call." These agents, though subordinate to the Spirit, represent the human part of a divine plan for publishing the Gospel; and the discussion of their calls involves the necessity of defining duties, correcting errors and inciting Christian activity. Besides, the author, having been called by Providence to oversee a new interest, is anxious at the start to establish in the minds of his hearers the cardinal principles of church prosperity. He gives a practical turn to the exercises of devotion, and combats the notion that the church is a mere place of entertainment. This notion shows itself in magnificent temples, in indolent hearers and in crushing mortgages. Not until the church becomes more intent on doing good than on receiving good will those encumbrances be lifted which are creating so much scandal. The responsibilities of the hearer are fully discussed. He is liable to forget that he is a factor in all church work, and to hope that he will be something in heaven while he is content to be nothing on earth.

The sermon on "the sin against the Holy Ghost" was not prepared for this work. The author's attention was directed to this grave subject by the distress of one of his most exemplary members who had become morbidly sensitive in regard to this sin. This sermon has been sanctioned by the divine blessing in most special ways and is inserted here as an appropriate supplement to "Come, The Inspiring Word of Grace."

The author claims no superior merit for this book. He is conscious of its many imperfections. Book-making is not his profession. The book grew incidentally by the force of circumstances rather than from any pre-arranged plan; and, to say nothing of its other defects, it wants that systematic arrangement generally seen in works which were books in conception. It is now offered, such as it is, to the public, with the sincere desire that it may do good.

W. O. OWEN.

CHESTNUT LEVEL, PA., Feb. 24, 1879.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
Preface.....	3

I.

THE SYSTEM OF GRACE MADE AVAILABLE BY THE WORD COME.

TEXT—Come, a beautiful and inspiring word—These qualities illustrated in Rev. 22 : 17—Theme and arrangement—The system of grace—Historical import—Doctrinal development—Unity of the Scriptures—A finished blessing—Illustrated by water—Water purifies—Quenches thirst—Is most beautiful and beautifying—“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God”—System of grace, the river, flowing out in promises to gladden the hearts of believers—Gladdens the moral face of the earth—Cheers revelation—Beautifies human nature—Adorns the outward man—Water, a free gift of Providence—Grace a free gift—Water an inexhaustible element—Stream flowing from Calvary—Conclusion.....9-33

II.

THE MESSENGERS OF GRACE WHOSE OFFICE IS TO SAY, COME.

THE SPIRIT'S CALL.

In nature much concealed value—Retired worth—Grace made available—Messengers of grace—The Spirit's call necessary—Human talent inadequate—Divine agency required—The Holy Ghost given—His call general and special—Nature of His special call—Man wants power and inclination—The Spirit convinces of sin—Of righteousness—Shows the efficacy of the

atonement—Day of Pentecost—Tendency to deprive this event of its practical bearing—Intimation of danger—Method of the Spirit's call—He reveals the hidden excellency of truths in the Bible—Operates in harmony with man's mental constitution—Method illustrated in repentance—In faith—Summing up—Objection answered.....33-57

THE BRIDE'S CALL.

Metaphorical name—A fine touch—Why the church is employed by the Spirit—Her call does not collide with the functions of the Spirit—The church a holy institution—A missionary institution—Arrangement—She calls by her character—She calls by her songs of praise—Music attractive—Lulls the passions—The prophet Elisha—Enthusiasm the least benefit the sinner derives from sacred music—Sacred music an exercise of the church—Is intended for her improvement—The sinner's greatest benefits derived from the zeal it kindles in the church—Music intended for a display does not secure these results—Expense of fashionable church music—Instrumental music in churches—The church invites by her prayers—This call partially direct—Subjective benefits of prayer—Objective influence—Objections answered—Efficacy of prayer for sinners—Saul of Tarsus—Revivals—The church calls through the ministry—Eloquence of Paul at Lystra—The pulpit orator has a two-fold advantage—The ministry in relation to the church—The Press—This call diffusive—Thorough—Durable—Science and politics teach the church a lesson—Missionary societies—The church in heaven says, Come—Posthumous influence—Bunyan, Baxter, and others—Dr. Thomas Scott—Saints in heaven have an unlimited lease for usefulness—Their calls more impressive—A circumstance the mind readily glides over..... 57-114

THE HEARER'S CALL.

Individual responsibilities often not felt—The church is the individual multiplied—Individual responsibilities not absorbed in the ministry—Profession-hood *vs.* manhood—Punishment of dissenters—Dean Stanley's apology—To do good, a natural privilege—Duty of assisting the ministry in a work of mutual interest—How hearers may assist their pastor—Their obligation to do so—The hearer a factor in church work—Much of this work he cannot do personally—Must then be represented by a minister—The obligations of hearers not eliminated from ministerial work—They are responsible for his failures—They should pray for him—Prayer implies corresponding effort—Hearers should assist their pastor by cultivating piety—By doing in a simpler way much of his work—The sphere of Christian ladies—Assistance necessary to a successful ministry—Another line of argumentation—Ministerial jealousy appeased—The obligation to evangelize the world rests with Christians in general—Principles determining our duty—The hearer defined—His opportunities—The practical fisherman—Mr. Moody—The Young Men's Christian Association—A faithful pulpit implies a working laity—Piety must be cultivated by doing good—We teach that we may learn—We learn that we may teach—We should build churches for practical culture—A desire only to receive good censurable—Selfish and unreasonable expectations may cause a minister's removal—The notion that the ministry is the only medium of usefulness quite prevalent—Mutual assistance—A converted membership insisted on—Responsibility should be placed on every member—Organized efforts—Sermons should awaken compassion for sinners—A blessing invoked on laymen.....114-156

III.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THOSE WHOSE PRIVILEGE IT IS TO COME.

Recapitulation—The qualifications for salvation—The term qualification suspicious—The qualifications for grace not meritorious—Illustration—A mere desire not meritorious—Nor a resolution—The prodigal son—These conditions include the elements of repentance and faith—Repentance explained—David's penitence—A willingness to go to Christ practically includes saving faith—The will not always influenced by desire—A belief in some attainable good, united with desire, will influence a suitable choice—Those having gracious desires invited to Christ—The danger of hesitancy—The import of an absolute refusal of grace. . . . 156-170

IV.

THE REFUSAL: OR THE NATURE OF THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

TEXT—Mysteries in the Bible—Many truths in relation to God beyond finite research—Truths relating to the duty of man intended to be known—A practical question—This sin not a rare depravity—Does not rest on the outward act of speaking—Is a resistance of the heart to the Spirit—This exegesis supported by arguments—Special mention is made of the Spirit—Argument from analogy—Argument drawn from the sinner's relation to the Spirit—This sin cannot be committed against the Father—Nor against the Son—Nor in a state of grace—Must be committed by the impenitent against the Spirit—How this becomes unpardonable—First inference—Second inference—Scriptural illustrations—The inhabitants of the old world—King Saul—David's chief concern—Our Saviour's lamentation over Jerusalem—The sin unto death—Conclusion—Comfort for the sensitive Christian—Hopeless regret felt for the abandoned—Solicitude for sinners. 170-195

THE SYSTEM OF GRACE MADE AVAILABLE BY THE WORD, COME.

“And the Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst, come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”
Rev. xxii: 17.

COME is one of the most beautiful and most inspiring words in our language. It is a pure Anglo-Saxon word and is remarkable, especially, for its musical power. It gratifies us with a mellow harmony which softly glides away in a sweet cadence resembling the dying sound of the golden bell which, often having left the ear, still lingers delightfully in the soul. *Come—e—e—e*. The bell in the steeple, inviting souls thirsting for divine knowledge to the house of the Lord, almost articulates this word—almost says, in the language of our compassionate Saviour, *Come, come, come unto me*. How unlike is it to the opposite word, *depart*, which is not only harsh to the ear, but heavy to the heart, which it sinks into black despair.

But, its rhetorical beauty is the least of its excellencies. It has meaning as well as harmony. It has delight for the soul, as well as melody for the ear. *Come* is one of our most inspiring words. You may say to a man perishing in a desert, who would give all he is worth for a single cup of cold water, “Friend, I can tell you of a fountain, pure and sparkling, that would quench your thirst, but it is a thousand miles

off, too far, indeed, to be of any service to you." How can this kind of talk revive the flagging energies of that man? Your fine description of that fountain will only torture him—will only excite his thirst, intensify his sufferings, and sink him more speedily into hopeless despondency. But, if you say, "Friend, I have just discovered a spring of pure cold water, and have come to you to say—'Come, drink and live,'" immediately the shadows of despair are dispelled, hope spreads over his countenance its bright rays, and energy is diffused through his tottering limbs. He arises. He is revived even before his thirst is quenched. What has thus transformed him? It is the power in the word *come*, pointing to a near and available relief, that changes his aspect and revives his energies. You remember, brethren, when you felt like this man, and when, like him, you were cheered by the power of the word, *come*. When you wandered on the barren mountain of sin, when you saw above nothing but an angry God, beneath nothing but a gulf of darkness, before, nothing but endless misery, and behind, nothing but the path of folly pursued, alas, all the days of your life; then you were famishing. When a messenger of peace came to you saying, "Get out of this wilderness of despair, come to the Fountain of Life," then you felt all the power of the word, *come*, and responded:

"I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Hath like a mountain rose;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose."

The word *come* is inspiring because it excites hope, and it loses its power whenever hope, by fruition or despair, can have no possible existence. Hence, *come*, peculiarly belongs to the current language of this world. In Heaven hope is lost in fruition, and angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, who are always bathing in the ocean of divine love, always drinking from the fount of bliss, can never be cheered forward by a messenger who should say to them, "come." In perdition, through whose dark crevices no stream of life flows to afford even a drop of cold water to quench the thirst of those who are burning under a torturing sense of lost blessings, the word, *come*, is never heard. But, on earth, where there is neither the fruition of heaven, nor the despair of perdition, where desire may be accompanied with a reasonable expectation of obtaining actual good, the word, *come*, has a peculiar animating power. Here it excites hope—the anchor of the soul.

Then, the word, *come*, is at once beautiful and inspiring, and both these qualities are fully sustained in the language of our text: "And the Spirit and the Bride say, *come*. And let him that heareth say, *come*. And let him that is athirst, *come*. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.' Every one must discover a beauty in all this. Every sentence flows along as smoothly as "the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," to which it invites us, and then we are conducted to a most harmonious conclusion. That you may see the influence the word, *come*, exerts in producing this delightful

effect, substitute for it any other word, and the passage will at once lose all its harmony.

But, this is also one of the most inspiring passages of Scripture. It has raised many souls from blank despair; awakened in them the most lively expectations; and, under the Holy Spirit, has diffused through all their faculties an energy that conducted them into the highest spiritual enjoyments. O, how many ransomed souls in the other world can point to this passage and say, "there is the power that lifted me from wretchedness into Heaven." But what gives this passage its animating power? Certainly, the metaphor under which it presents the sinner excites the most wretched feelings. Nothing can be more agonizing to the heart than the contemplation of a man thirsting and dying for the want of water. It is true that a fountain, the metaphor under which it presents eternal life, is associated with refreshing ideas. But these very ideas increase the intensity of the sufferings of those who are thirsting, and yet have no interest in its flowing stream. Do you not know that the condition of the lost is rendered most acutely painful by their beholding from the shores of perdition a living fountain, affording others the purest enjoyments, which it forever denies them? *Come*, however, sounding across what would otherwise be a chasm of despair, gives this encouraging passage of Scripture all its animating power. It excites hope. It forms a ligament between desire and expectation. It opens a channel between the fountain of life and the soul thirsting for the living God. Borne on the lips of both the Eternal Spirit and the church of the

Living God, it tells the sinner who thirsts that he may "take the water of life freely."

The theme we derive from this passage is, *Come, the Inspiring Word of Grace*. Our thoughts on this theme shall be arranged under the following heads:

I. The system of Grace made available by the word, *come*.

II. The Messengers whose office it is to say, *come*.

III. The qualifications of those whose privilege it is to *come*.

I. In this discourse we shall dwell exclusively upon the System of Grace made available by the word, *come*. We shall first bestow a few remarks upon the preparation of this system; and, secondly, discuss more fully its application in a state of completion.

1. The preparation of this system employed thousands of years, and systemizes the whole history of the divine administration in relation to the world, prior to the establishment of the Gospel era. There is a remarkable harmony of all the events which enter into the system of grace. Like the links of a chain, they are so many separate parts; but, linked together, they form one undivided whole. Historically, this system had its origin in Eden, (or rather in Eden arose the necessity for this system,) and in its operations will extend to the glorious era of the universal reign of King Jesus, when Eden will again appear in all her beauty and delight. In this way the extremes of this system must meet. It commenced in Eden and, in its restorative capacity, must terminate in Eden. In the latter relation Eden is called

the New Jerusalem, which John, on the Isle of Patmos, most beautifully describes as follows: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." In this description of Paradise regained, can you not see an allusion to Paradise lost?

Doctrinally, this system extends from Genesis to Revelation; and all the intermediate events depend upon each other as one stone rests upon another from the foundation to the top of the building. At first, we have a description of man in his primeval condition, enjoying the approving glances of his Maker. Then, we have his fall, his shame, and his attempt to hide from Jehovah. Then, we have his curse, to remove which, four thousand years after, our blessed Saviour expired on Mount Calvary. Then, we have the promise of his recovery given in the declaration that "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Then we have the patriarchal dispensation in which the information relative to Jehovah is meagre, confined to only a few of his attributes. Then, in a higher state of development of this system, we have the wonderful machinery of the Mosaic dispensation, designed to convey through the senses to the

mind correct ideas of God's holiness, justice and mercy, and which was preparatory to the spiritual dispensation to which it relates in its ceremonial and sacrificial elements. Then we have the prophets who predict the establishment, prosperity, and ultimate triumph of the kingdom of Christ. Then we have the dispensation of John the Baptist, which is a connecting link between Judaism and Christianity. Then we have the life, character and miracles of Christ; then, his sufferings, death and resurrection; then, the comprehensive commission he gave his apostles; then his ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And now this system is completed, and we have it tried, and its sufficiency shown in the establishment of Christian churches in Judea, Samaria, and throughout the Roman empire. After the trial of this system which proves it to be sufficient to meet the requirements of man's fallen nature, we have, then, in the conclusion of divine revelation, the gracious invitation of Christ Jesus, "the root and offspring of David and the bright and morning star," to all who need salvation, to partake freely of its purifying and saving virtues.

Thus we see the gradual development of the successive parts of this plan of salvation. It is true, in the Bible in which this system is recorded, there is a diversity of style and language. Sometimes it denounces or expostulates. Sometimes it is descriptive or pathetic. Sometimes it is poetical, sententious or devotional. Sometimes biographical or historical, relating to individuals, families or nations. But the thoughtful reader will discover running through all

this diversity an all-absorbing design—a system into which converges everything from beginning to end. Though thousands of years intervened, we see here the intimate relation between Genesis and Revelation. In the one we have a record of the terrible pollution into which man fell. But there is now a fountain opened in the House of David for sin and uncleanness. Hence, in the conclusion of the other, we have an invitation to all guilty and polluted sinners to “take the water of life freely.”

2. But *come* invites us to a finished blessing. We shall, therefore, notice more particularly the system of grace in a state of completion, and shall illustrate its purifying and life-giving efficacy under the beautiful and appropriate figure of water. In Scripture, *water* has a variety of metaphorical meanings; but never is it more aptly employed than when made to represent the efficacy and freeness of grace in Christ Jesus.

Water is used for cleansing purposes. This illustrates the purifying influence of grace. Sin has defiled all man’s inward feelings, faculties and powers. This moral pollution often affects his outward condition, and clothes him in rags; makes him lie down in filth; and reduces him to such wretchedness that, like the prodigal, who wasted his substance in riotous living, he fain would satisfy his hunger with the husks which the swine do eat. Sin extends its defiling influence to all his actions and relations, so that it becomes not only an individual but a social, and not only a social, but a national pollution. Now, it is the peculiar office

of divine grace to raise man from a condition of moral wretchedness, and to cleanse the conscience and affections of all their guilt and defilement by the "washing of regeneration." This is the "fountain opened for sin and uncleanness."

Water will quench thirst, and is necessary to the support of life. Every person, in his unregenerate condition, has a desire for something that the world can never give. This *something* is enduring, unalloyed, peace and happiness. But, such is the sinner's delusion, that he will endure almost any hardship, will submit to almost any mortification, and will climb ascents the most slippery and hazardous for "meat that satisfieth not." And the saddest feature of all is, that the treasures of the world, instead of satisfying the desire of the heart, only increase it, only render the sufferings of the poor deluded soul the more intolerable. I once read a sad account of a company of soldiers who traveled a long time in a country destitute of water. They were ready to perish, when several of their number discovered a beautiful sparkling fountain. They instantly cried out in great raptures of joy—*water! water!! water!!!* Immediately the soldiers ran to the beautiful fountain, and so eager were they to quench their thirst, that some lifted the water to their mouths with their hands, and others with their hats; but what must have been their disappointment when, tasting it, they found it to be *salt water*. One of the officers, instantly struck with the danger of their situation, raised his hands and cried out at the top of his voice—*Go*

back! Go back!! Salt water! Salt water!! Had they drunk of that water it would have so increased their thirst that their condition would have been rendered unendurable, and every man would have speedily “dropped his carcass in the wilderness.” Well, this is the character of the honors, riches and pleasures of this world. They prove to be *salt water* to the deluded soul. Sinners eagerly grasp after them; but every acquisition they make, instead of satisfying their desire, only increases it, only intensifies their sufferings, and hastens on more rapidly their destruction. But, thank God, the water of salvation is not *salt water*. It will quench the thirst; it will satisfy the desire of the heart; it will refresh the soul, and make a man strong, cheerful and happy. This is the water our Saviour referred to, when he said to the woman of Samaria: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that sayeth to thee, Give me to drink, thou would’st have asked of him and he would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Thank God for this water, and thank him for the hearty and free invitation to partake of its saving and refreshing virtues! “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!” “On the last, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink.”

Water possesses healing virtues. Medicinal springs are resorted to all over the world. The pool of Bethesda was famous, in the days of our Saviour, for

the healing virtues of its waters; but this we are told was owing to a miraculous cause. "An angel descended into the pool at certain seasons, and troubled the waters; and whosoever first after the troubling of the waters, stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had." We also read in the Old Testament that Naaman, the Syrian, by direction of Elisha, was healed of an inveterate leprosy by dipping himself seven times in the river Jordan. And the blind man whom our Saviour healed by placing clay on his eyes was directed to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He went, he washed, and he came seeing. In nothing is the similitude between water and divine grace more striking than in a medicinal point of view. The final design of divine grace is the eradication from the soul of the fatal virulency of sin diffused through all its powers; its healthy employment in the delightful services of its Creator; and its final elevation to a state of constant enjoyment. O, why is so little interest felt in this remedy? Why so few who avail themselves of its virtues? Should a fountain open somewhere, possessing virtues capable of curing every bodily disease, it would be the theme of universal praise, and would attract immense crowds of diseased pilgrims from every part of the world, who would impatiently wait for an opportunity to step in and be healed of their several maladies. Is the salvation of the soul less important? Why, then, do we not see such immense crowds rushing to the Fountain of Life?

Water is one of the most beautiful and most beautifying objects of nature. By its transparency and

its association with whatever is pure and luxuriant, it excites the most agreeable sensations. Besides, the lulling noise, the graceful curves, and the gentle motions which constantly agitate the thoughts without violently raising them into the region of the sublime, are principles of beauty which meet in the stream and entertain the beholder with a variety of delights as it flows in its meandering course through the country. Water, also, enlivens and beautifies the sceneries of nature. It imparts a glow of freshness to vegetation; it bespangles objects with dew-drops which, like diamonds, reflect a variety of the most cheering colors; and it even beautifies the most unsightly appearances by surrounding them with gay sceneries which soften down their rudeness and tinge them with the rich coloring of the landscape. Thus lakes and rivers modify the ruggedness of towering rocks which, in their own solitariness, excite only feelings of the sublime, by blending them with green fields and shady groves. Then these rocks, by a reflection of their borrowed graces, shade and variegate the whole scenery, thus increasing the delightful effect produced in the fancy. The most beautiful of all nature's rocks was the one smitten in the wilderness. Its ruggedness was relieved by the copious stream of water it poured forth in a dry region for the relief of a famishing populace. Even the pyramids of Egypt, which strike the mind with only the sublimity of ancient folly, and are attended with as little refreshment in the imagination as they are in their own sterile desert, would appear as most pleasant and entertaining shows of architecture, if, surrounded by

enlivening streams instead of burning sands, their rude magnificence were mellowed down with the cheerful glow of wild flowers, pomegranite orchards and forests of sycamore waving in full bloom. The pleasant springs and purling streams, more than anything else, give an enchantment to those scenes of early life at which our fancies linger in delight. I frequently, when a boy, sat alone on the banks of a familiar stream. In those solitary moments, while listening to no other music but the babbling of the water beneath and the occasional chirping of birds in the trees, I held sweet communion with nature, and my memory reverts to those scenes of quietude with a melancholy pleasure. The youth of Gray's immortal elegy felt the power of this enchantment:

“There at the foot of yonder nodding beach,
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length, at noontide, would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.”

It was his poring “upon the brook that babbled by,” rather than his stretching “his listless length” “at the foot of yonder nodding beach,” that enabled our polished author to paint this most beautiful picture of fancy.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.” An allusion is here made to the waters of Siloam, which, though of no great depth or breadth, were sufficient to supply Jerusalem with refreshment. The psalmist, however, in penning this beautiful passage, had a more cheering blessing in view.

The system of grace is the river which, in its special relation to the church, flows out in streams of promises to gladden the hearts of believers in the midst of dark and discouraging seasons. What is more beautiful and picturesque than the metaphors under which David expresses his abiding confidence in the Shepherd of the Universe. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

In its more general relation to the world, this river flows out in streams of divine ordinances to beautify the moral face of the world. As it promotes civilization and enterprise, Christianity spreads a cheering influence over even the natural face of the earth. Under the resistless march of civilization, the sombre forests and pestilential swamps are changed into cultivated fields; the savage huts give place to buildings of architectural taste, ornamented with surrounding flowers, gardens and orchards; and even the rude savage himself, whose mind is as uncultivated as the forests through which he roams, is adorned with intellectual refinement and enabled to enter into the customs of his more highly educated brethren. But the system of grace especially gladdens the moral face of the world. In its moral aspect there are in the world many parched deserts, many barren mountains, many fruitless wastes and many dismal swamps surrounded with the dank, deadly malaria of paganism. Still, there are streams of life running through this desert waste, producing many green and cultivated spots of grace which, by ever widening and ever becoming more numerous, promise us that ulti-

mately "the wilderness and solitary place shall be made glad; that "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;" and that Eden shall again appear in all her beauty and delight.

The River of Life gladdens the system of divine truth. It is no irreverence to say that the Bible contains many unpleasant, many dismal, many terrifying truths. The Bible is a revelation *of* man as well as *to* man. The repulsive features of a delinquent world are copied in it by the pen of inspiration; and it is an evidence of its truth that it paints human life in its true living colors. The heroes of romance may be dressed in such characters as would indicate that they inhabit some fairy-land in which dwell nothing but purity and virtue; but the Bible describes even its most illustrious characters with such candor as points to sinners as their brethren, and to earth as their fatherland. We know not that a written revelation has been given to the pure inhabitants of other worlds. The necessity for such a revelation would seem precluded by their privilege of looking directly in the face of their Creator. But it is certain that if such a revelation were given, it would be more cheering than ours. Confined in its details to the history of the happy throng for whose improvement it was given and to the evolution of the more amiable traits of the divine character, it would contain no account of a wrecked world, no flood sweeping away its wicked inhabitants, no fire and brimstone raining upon its abandoned cities, no records stained with crimson, no terrifying views of their Creator. A consciousness of guilt, and a perception of omnipotent power de-

pending upon motives that are not known, are the sources of that terror with which the inhabitants of earth invest their Creator. Conscious of guilt, and so lapsed in his moral nature as to be unable to discover the benevolent intentions dwelling in the divine mind, the sinner beholds with terror an incensed Being who holds in his hands all the agencies of destruction. But to beings who, conscious of no guilt, can look straight into the face of their Creator, and whose moral perceptions are so acute as to discern goodness as the predominant trait of the divine character, Jehovah would appear in this angelic revelation as a most lovely Being. It is evident, then, that a revelation of sinful man and of an offended God must be dismal and terrific. But the river of life brightens up the whole scene. Mercy mingles with justice. The Gospel throws a cheerfulness around the law. Jesus Christ reveals the loveliness of Deity. Streams of life sparkle amid truths stern and forbidding; flow through the crevice opened by the convulsion of man's original apostacy; and spread over the entire sacred landscape such a gladness as melts down into one glow of associated beauty the ruggedness of the most dismal truths, which in their own solitariness, rise up in terrific grandeur, like Sinai, around whose summit lightnings flash and thunders roll.

The River of Life beautifies human nature. The nature of man shows itself in two sets of faculties, belonging respectively to the mind and the heart. Upon the former depends its sublimity; upon the latter its beauty. The intellect may unfold the deep things of creation, may count the stars, and, taking its stand

upon the summit of all visible appearances, may look out upon a far-stretching field of suns and systems where we had thought there was nothing but unlimited and empty space; but, unless the heart lays hold of the loveliness of God and appropriates the atonement of Christ in all its cleansing and vivifying influences, these intellectual achievements are only the magnificent pyramids of human nature. Rising up in their own sterile desert, they are no less dismal than amazing to the sight of the beholder. The intellect lost but little of its energy by the fall. It is the moral nature that has been ruined; it is the heart that has been transformed into a barren and dreary desert. In classic literature we behold wonderful displays of intellectual energy; but, associated as they are, with defective morals, unsettled and cheerless notions of Deity, and shocking and sensual acts of devotion, they wear the melancholy grandeur of immense towers standing in a sombre wilderness destitute of all life and beauty. Grace, and not genius, can impart a moral beauty to man. The River of Life streaming into the heart, purling among the affections, shining out in Christian graces and vivifying the tender plants of virtue, alone can spread a cheerfulness over human nature. Though essentially rough parts cling to man which divine influence will not at present loosen and dissolve, still, blended with imparted and cultivated graces, they shade and variegate, rather than deform this scenery of moral beauty. Thus "the hidden man of the heart" is adorned with an incorruptible ornament, "even a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."

The River of Life even beautifies the outward man. It awakens benevolent feelings, and imparts a grace to his manners, which adorns his social intercourses. It so purifies his conscience, so quiets the turbulence of his heart, and so inspires him with the hope of present support and future felicity as to impart to his countenance an expression of candor, and peace, and joy. This beauty defies the infirmities of age. The landscape may exhibit trees riven by lightning, fences scattered by the storm, and roofless buildings sinking to the ground, which once resounded with a merriment now hushed in the tomb; still it retains amid these ruins a constant beauty, if there be running through it a stream of water refreshing wild flowers which do not disdain to bloom amid the desolations of time's withering touch. So the Christian retains a tranquil beauty which beams amid wrinkles, and is undiminished while the graces of the body, one after another, are fading away. Even when the soul, thus cleansed, thus calmed, and thus inspired, has been separated from its earthly tabernacle, an impress of its cheerfulness is left upon the marble countenance as it lies cold in the coffin.

Water is a free gift of Providence. It is certainly an evidence of God's impartial benevolence that, whatever may be the disadvantages of poverty, his most valuable gifts are bestowed upon us without money or price. Poverty is a calamity more fanciful than real. It is a calamity to the man who can see no other value than that which money can purchase; but, it is only a slight annoyance to the man who appreciates the higher blessings which money cannot

purchase. The distinction between wealth and poverty is well marked in relation to minor blessings; but this distinction grows fainter and finally disappears, as the mind rises higher and higher in its conceptions, until a point of observation is reached where it may survey the most valuable gifts which Providence bestows alike upon the rich and the poor. In this region, so high above the possibility of speculation, all are equally blessed. It is a singular truth that many blessings so valuable as to lie beyond the reach of money fall within the reach of those who have no money. Poverty, then, is a denial of the minor, not of the greater gifts of Providence. In relation to our present existence nothing is more valuable than the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the rays which stream upon us from the sun. We cannot live without them, while we may live in comparative ease without wealth. But money cannot lay hold of them, cannot monopolize them, cannot retail them out by the gallon or cubic foot at extortionary prices. They are so valuable that the poor may enjoy them in common with the rich. We can imagine a man in such a condition that he would give all he is worth for a cup of water; but we cannot imagine a man in such poverty that he could not afford the luxuries of the flowing stream. Divine grace, like water, is a blessing too valuable to be purchased by money. It, therefore, falls within the reach of the poor. "Whosoever will, may come, and take the water of life freely." We must not, however, understand the freeness of salvation in the sense in which it is held by many miserly professors who congratulate

themselves upon the possession of a religion that costs them nothing. We once heard of a minister who was interrupted in his discourse in such a way as gave him an unexpected opportunity to check a false inference. While he was dwelling in eloquent terms upon the freeness of salvation, one of his members, who was more impressed with the *freeness* of grace than with its tendency to awaken charitable emotions, shouted out: "Glory to God for a free salvation. I have had religion for twenty years, and it never cost me a dollar." Instantly the minister stopped; then his brows began to knit; then his recently serene countenance began to be overclouded with a gathering storm of righteous indignation; then bursted forth the thunder-bolt—"May the Lord have mercy upon your poor stingy soul." This, we hope, killed the vain presumption of the miser. It is true, water is free; but the water works and pipes used to convey it to the inhabitants of the town cost something to be kept in repair. In like manner, the Home and Foreign Mission works and the many appliances employed to convey salvation, in itself free, to the multitudes famishing in the moral deserts of the world, are attended with considerable expense. O, can we not convince you, that the money you spend in the cause of Christ, is not to purchase heaven, but to extend the privileges of a free salvation to others? Here let me guard you against two essentially fatal extremes. O, be careful that you are not numbered among those who would make salvation a commodity for the market, who would claim a superior place in heaven for a superior price paid on earth, and who

would thus transfer to a region of purity and love the same moneyed distinction under which many in society are groaning. Be equally careful that you are not numbered among those who extol the *freeness* of grace, rather than its power to destroy the selfishness of our natures, and who have one hand tightly clasped upon the purse and the other raised to heaven while they shout, "Glory to God for a salvation that never cost me a dollar."

Water is an inexhaustible element of nature. There is now as much water in Jacob's well as there was when our blessed Saviour sat upon it, while he rested his body and at the same time relieved his soul of its solicitude for the salvation of Samaria; and there was as much then as there had been immediately after it had been opened in the valley of Sechem. There is now as much water rolling down the Susquehanna as there was when the foot-prints of the savage could be traced in the sands which covered its wild shores. In like manner, the stream bursting from the smitten rock, flowing down the slope of calvary, and forming the River of Life, glides through the world as copiously as ever, though it has cheered the souls and cleansed the robes of millions rejoicing in heaven. Indeed, like the widow's cruse of oil, it increases as you take from it. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." When you drink of this water, you do more than assuage, from an external source, a thirst that will again return in all its fearful agonies. You take in a principle of grace that

becomes permanently located in your heart, and that so assimilates itself with your moral nature as to be "in you a well of water"—a never-failing source of spiritual refreshment—a fountain, ever flowing and ever seeking new channels to other hearts in which other fountains are opened, whence others, and still others, are opened. Then these individual rivulets bursting from millions of hearts flow back into the River of Life, causing it to swell, to flow on with an increased impetus, and to speed the glorious era when it shall spread life and cheerfulness and beauty over the earth as the waters cover the great deep.

Such, then, is the system of grace made available by the word, *come*. Such is its design, its beginning, its growth, and its completion. Such is its application as a most efficient agency in cleansing, refreshing and restoring the moral nature of man. Such is its beautifying influence over the church, over the entire world, over the system of divine revelation and over the inner and outer man. Such is its freeness and its constant and ever increasing copiousness. One would suppose that such a combination of everything essential to life and happiness, flowing from the benevolence of God, could not fail to arrest universal attention; that the soul which so frequently experienced every system of philosophy and every other form of religion to be "a dry and thirsty land where no water is," could not refuse to drink of that gracious stream which sparkles before our eyes. O, why will you lie down in your filth when there is water to cleanse you? Why will you suffer all the pains of a perpet-

ual thirst when a pure limpid stream flows at your feet? Why will you allow a loathesome and fatal disease to carry you into perdition, when you have only to step into the pool and be healed? Why will you remain in all your ugliness, when grace holds before you a cosmetic that will preserve in your soul all the bloom of youth in defiance of all the ravages of time and all the worms which infest the tomb? Have you no money? The value of grace is too high to be reached by money. It rises even so high as to fall within the region of poverty. Why then will you refuse it? But we may describe the excellencies of the River of Life; we may, then, ask why, and why, and why! The flinty rock will just as readily answer. Descriptions and appeals will not awaken the dead. The messengers whose office it is to invite you must be accompanied with a power that will arouse you. This, as we will show in our next discourse, the Spirit does when he says, Come.

THE MESSENGERS WHOSE OFFICE IS TO SAY, COME.

THE SPIRIT'S CALL.

THIS system of grace, so copious and so free; so competent to cleanse, revive and beautify the moral nature of man, is made available by the word, *come*. In nature there is a great deal of concealed value. There are many fountains unproclaimed and unvisited, whose virtues are wasted in the solitude of the valley. The region of hidden treasures contains richer mines of wealth than any yet discovered.

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness in the desert air.”

Many a “ mute and inglorious ” genius would shine as brightly, if brought out, as any whose valor fills the world with praise, or whose eloquence “ commands the applause of listening senates.” There is a human worth too heavy, it would seem, to be thrown to the surface from the depth of its obscurity by the political ebullitions that bring so much lighter material into notoriety. Brass is lighter than gold ; and this lighter metal, rather than the heavier, is often seen in those who have forced themselves into public notice. That so much worth should remain hidden and unavailable in this world, is one of the mysteries

eternity must reveal. So it is in nature; but it is not so in grace. Grace transcends nature in this, as well as in other respects, that its richest treasures are revealed to the world. There are no hidden streams of life running to waste, no unexplored mines of wealth lying useless in the plan of salvation. It is true, there are mysteries in this plan. All the wealth of the divine attributes are thrown into it, and its exploration will afford us delightful employment in eternity. Its mysteries, however, belong to the divine counsels, in relation to which we may devoutly exclaim: "O, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" But there is nothing in the system of salvation really valuable in relation to the well-being of man that has not been made available. The same divine goodness that opened a fountain of salvation, also made arrangements to have it brought to the notice of a polluted, famishing and sin-sick world, by commissioning divine and human agents to say, "come"—"take the water of life freely." This brings us to notice—

II. The messengers whose office it is to say, come. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come." In this discourse we will discuss the necessity, the nature and the method of the Spirit's call.

1. "The Spirit says, come." This welcome voice of the Spirit makes Christianity an available and an

ever-expanding blessing to the world. Without it the atonement of Christ would have been a hidden treasure. Owing to the obscurity of our Saviour's birth, the limited sphere of his influence, the short duration of his official career, the humble and illiterate character of his associates, the fewness of his followers—many of whom followed him for the loaves and fishes, and at the first appearance of difficulties forsook him—and the unsettled dispositions, together with the defective spiritual training of those who professed to love him, the cause for which he poured out his precious blood would have remained in concealment after his ascension, had it been left to the management of mere human dexterity. Then Jacob would have remained small; then the stone, which was to break into pieces Nebuchadnezzar's image, never would have grown into a mountain; then the fountain of life would have run to waste amid the hills and the valleys of Judea. It would have run to waste, not for the want of intrinsic value, but for the want of a divine energy to bring into contact with its saving truths souls thirsting for the water of life.

Had Christianity been left, like some system of philosophy, to be advanced by the ordinary faculties of the mind, it never would have obtained the hold which it now has upon the world. Indeed, had its success been made a question of mere mental power, it would have obtained no hold at all, as the most refined intellects of that day were arrayed against its claims. "The world by wisdom knew not God," nor ever will, by the ordinary powers of conception, know him in the grand scheme of redemption. This

scheme lies too high for the unaided grasp of the most brilliant intellect. Besides, like the morbid condition of the rabid animal which is thrown into convulsions at the sight of water, there is an obstinate state of depravity which makes the Fountain of Life repulsive to the human heart. This deep-rooted antipathy in man must in some way be overcome; the film that darkens his moral perceptions, must, in some way, be penetrated; his inward pollution, want and malady, must, in some way, be discovered to his soul; a conviction of the truth and efficacy of the atonement to meet the requirements of his fallen nature, must, in some way, be produced, before the Gospel can be brought to his favorable notice and secure his unshaken confidence. This, certainly, is a work too great for human talent. How can talent lodge in the soul a truth against which all its inward feelings are in a state of revolt?

The system of grace, divine in its origin, divine in its purifying effect, must also be divine in the agency by which it is brought to the notice and the relief of perishing sinners. Now, as ever, does this hold true. Now, as ever, is apparent the futility of every effort to awaken a religious interest by the exercise of those ordinary powers by which secular enterprises are advanced. My dear brethren, are you convinced of this truth? Are you convinced that a power infinitely more potent than the talent of your minister is necessary to lead perishing souls to the water of life? Do you pray that this power may impart an unction to every sermon, a conviction to every hearer of his spiritual destitution and of the availability of

the plan of salvation? Our blessed Saviour prayed for this power. He knew that after he would leave the world, his cause would perish if left to the management of the unaided powers of man; hence, he prayed the Father to send another Comforter to defend and superintend the interests of his cause until his second coming. Shall we blasphemously presume that in his estimate of human incompetency he overlooked us, and that we can successfully carry on this cause without prayer? O, Holy Spirit, breathe into us a spirit of earnest supplication!

The Comforter given to the world and the Church in answer to the intercession of Jesus, is the Holy Spirit. When he says, come, then the Fountain of Life can no longer remain a hidden blessing. Then, "in the wilderness, shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes." When he says come, then "the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." When he says come, sinners are made sensible of their defilement and of the fatality resting upon their souls; the current of their desires is changed; their will receives a new and gracious bias; they arise, and are seen coming, coming, coming, in deep contrition to the Fountain of Life opened in the bleeding wounds of our Saviour.

Thus we see the comprehensiveness of the word come, when pronounced by the Spirit. It includes

both the general and special calls of grace. In the former is implied his influence in all those missionary movements relating to the evangelization of the world. In the latter is implied that influence of the word which marks out an individual in an assembled multitude, and makes him the subject of special impressions resulting in the renewal of his moral nature.

2. Without dwelling at present upon those spiritual movements relating to the general diffusion of the Gospel, we will here bestow a few remarks upon the nature of the Spirit's operations in what is called an effectual call of grace. In this effectual call, the word *come*, as pronounced by the Spirit, is accompanied with a quickening and persuasive power, enabling the sinner to arise and go to the fountain of living waters.

Such is the terrible depravity of human nature that the sinner wants both power and inclination to partake of the water of life. Like the corpse, cold, stiff and lifeless, he is insensible to the wounds that sting, the joys that thrill, the motives that stir, and the hopes that animate those who are alive to their eternal welfare. *Come* may be sounded in his ears like a mighty roll of thunder, and it will leave him as listless as before, unless it can awaken the dead. But in addition to this negative incompetency resting upon his soul, he has a positive disrelish for the water of life; and to bring him into those spiritual enjoyments which are nauseating to his depraved taste, would increase rather than diminish his misery. How can the heart full of malice, how can the tongue cankered with slander, taste delight in a region of

purity and love? O, charge not your Maker with cruelty by denying you an entrance into Heaven, when your whole soul is thirsting for gratifications that are "earthly, sensual, devilish!" View it rather as an indication of divine benevolence in granting you a condition the most congenial to your depraved natures. Then the Spirit must by some mysterious influence remove this negative and this positive incompetency. He must in some way arouse the sinner from his deathly stupor and change the current of his desires, before he can go, or even can have an inclination to go, to the fountain of life. How does he do this?

Our Saviour promises that when the Comforter is "come, he will reprove [or convince, as it is in the margin] the world of sin and of righteousness." Again he says, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." These expressions indicate the relation of the Holy Spirit to the system of grace as the awakening and moving power that leads the sinner to repentance and into the fold of God. The Spirit *convinces him of sin*—of the odious, the fatal, the unsatisfying nature of sin, thus arousing his apprehensions, and creating within him a desire to be purified, refreshed and saved. This, certainly, is a gracious work of the Spirit. To see ourselves, to feel our wants, and to crave for gratifications pure and permanent, is the first step to happiness. But without hope, it is a step into misery—without Christ, it is a plunge into perdition. What else can that death be which the lost are ever vainly seeking, but a dormancy of those faculties which forever call up into their minds lost

privileges, and an insensibility of that conscience which is forever lashing them? To see danger and not a refuge; to feel the pains of thirst and not the hope of quenching it, is a most fearful condition. But the awakened sinner is not left to quake with fear, to burn with thirst, in this wilderness. He is not left to grope in darkness, to tear through brambles, and to wade through swamps in search of happiness without a guide, save the suggestions of unassisted reason, which, like the glimmers of the *ignis-fatuus*, bewilder and mislead his inquiring soul. He hears a voice ringing through the darkness. The Spirit again says, come—this time not to awaken his slumbering faculties, but to guide his wandering feet to the Fountain of Life. The Spirit is now leading him to Christ by *convincing him of righteousness*. That is, the Spirit produces in his heart such a conviction that Christ was no deceiver, that he was unjustly put to death for an imposter, as carries with it a hearty acknowledgment of the righteousness of his character and justness of his pretensions. But the sinner may be brought to face Christ, to acknowledge his integrity, and to admire his wisdom and benevolence, still he may know nothing of the efficacy of his blood. There are systems of theology which admire Christ simply as an illustrious human reformer, whose doctrines display more wisdom and more practical utility than any ever published to the world, and whose sufferings, faced with the heroism of a martyr, possess the single merit of attesting the sincerity of his intentions, while they exclude what alone can gratify the soul under condemnation—the sacrificial

character of his death. The sinner, who was awakened and then led to Christ by the Spirit's call, is now invited to drink of salvation. The Spirit now *takes the things of Christ and shows them to him*. He shows him the doctrine of the atonement with all its attendant blessings, and so convinces him of its complete adaptation to his moral condition, as to awaken confidence in his Redeemer's power to save. Thus aroused, thus led and thus persuaded, he drinks and never thirsts again. In this way the sinner is brought to a saving knowledge of the system of grace by the Spirit when he effectually says, come. O, there is a progressive influence attending this word, come. The Spirit says, come, and the sinner, like Lazarus, emerges from the sepulchre of death. He says, come, and "as the hart panteth after the water brooks, so his soul thirsteth for the living God." He says, come, and he stands gazing admiringly on the River of Life clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. Again he says, come, and his soul is imbibing the purest enjoyments from the blissful stream. He sleeps, he wakes, he thirsts, he drinks. In this work of the Spirit there is not the least suspension of the exercise of the will. The water of life for which he thirsts, and to which he is brought, and of whose efficacy he is convinced, he is at liberty to accept or refuse; but such is the gracious influence under which even his will is brought, that in all the freedom of a responsible agent he goes to the fountain of life.

The early history of Christianity affords us a striking illustration of the Spirit's influence in inviting

the attention of a perishing world to this system of grace. As has already been stated, the unaided powers of man are incompetent to give it that publicity which, as a remedial system, it demands. Divine in its nature, it must be divine in the power of its promulgation. From its conception until its ultimate triumph, it must not be taken out of the hands of the triune God. The Father, after having devised the plan of salvation, sent his Son into the world to put it into execution. The Son, after having finished it, sent the Holy Spirit to maintain it amid all opposition and to make it an available blessing to the human family. After the Son ascended the Spirit descended. After the one went to Heaven, the other came to earth and at once instituted the spiritual dispensation. Thus commissioned, he immediately enters upon his gracious work, and the inauguration of his dispensation is attended with a most remarkable instance of both his general and his special calls to sinners. By a miraculous gift of tongues, he published the Gospel to the representatives of all the nations of the then known world. *Come, come, come*, was sounded in every language, and every one assembled on that occasion could carry the story of the cross home to his own kindred and country. While thus extending a general call to all, he was also extending an effectual call to some. He was convincing them of sin by sending home to their consciences the charge of murdering the blessed Jesus. He was convincing them of righteousness by lodging in their breasts a conviction of the resurrection of him whom they crucified. He was showing them the things of

Christ—the doctrines adapted to their moral necessities—which secured their confidence and of which they made a public profession by being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. In this personal, this effectual way, about three thousand souls heard the Spirit say, come, on this memorable occasion. This gracious work, so auspiciously commenced, was carried on, “and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

We fear there is a tendency to deprive this remarkable event of its practical bearing, and to consider it as a special divine interposition in behalf of Christianity in a peculiar emergency, rather than the commencement of a continuous influence which, like the opening of a river, shall flow on through all succeeding time. Christianity, yet weak in educational as well as in social and numerical resources, was brought to a crisis. It had to storm the kingdom of darkness before its efficacy could be known to the world; it had to force asunder the prejudice of the Jews and superstition of the pagans, venerable in age and strong in literature, before it could lay hold of the affections; and many, we fear, think that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was merely to meet this emergency and to supply the place of the wealth, talent and literature the church can now command and control to its own advantage. Hence there is a growing tendency to cringe before men of wealth and culture, while, at the same time, there is less agonizing prayer for divine influence. Be not deceived, brethren, by the alluring tendencies of the age. The publication of the Gospel and the conversion of sinners

in the nineteenth century depend upon an energy as superhuman as was the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost. Should the Spirit retire from his mission and hand over to the unaided powers of man the work of disseminating divine truth and of pressing it home to the conscience, the borders of Christianity would soon shrink, and darkness would soon cover the face of the earth. If you wish a revival in your midst you must not go to genius; you must, like the early disciples, go into your upper chambers, and there continue in prayer and supplication.

From all that has been said in relation to the necessity of the Spirit's influence, we gather an intimation of a fearful danger continually staring in the face of the incorrigible sinner. The Spirit will not always say, come. He may be provoked by a persistent rebellion to leave the sinner forever. O, then, he will have fastened upon the soul which he so frequently invited an irreversible doom. It is true, Jesus still stands, as he did on the last, the great day of the feast, and cries, "If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." But the difficulty with this abandoned soul is not that he has committed an inexpressible offense—there is virtue in the Fountain of Life that will cleanse sins of the deepest dye—but that he has neither power nor inclination to go to this fountain, and that he has driven off forever the Spirit whose office is to arouse his faculties and excite his desires. This is the unpardonable sin. It is unpardonable because it cannot be brought to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. O, sinner, beware, beware, beware, how you trifle with the Spirit that says, come.

3. We will now discuss the method of the Spirit's call in the way of answering two prominent objections. It is objected, first, that the doctrine of the Spirit's effectual call gives room for religious fanaticism; and, secondly, that it sets aside human agency in the process of regeneration.

The first objection may be stated thus: "If the ordinary powers of man are unable to discover the malady of our fallen natures and its appropriate remedy; and if the Spirit, by his immediate influence, must reprove sin, create faith in Christ and confidence in the terms of salvation, then the word of God, adapted to our ordinary perceptions, must be set aside in this work of grace; and then ignorance, associated with a belief in spiritual inspiration—the two elements of fanaticism—would give full reins to a religious enthusiasm that would furnish instances without number of visions, trances, and revelations of things seen in the future or other world." This conclusion would, indeed, be legitimate if the doctrine of the Spirit's agency implies that he acts independently of the written word and of our mental constitution in bringing souls to taste of the sweet comforts of grace. But certainly there is nothing in this doctrine to indicate such a mode of operation. The province of the Spirit is to reveal a terrific majesty and a divine excellency inside and not outside of the law and the gospel. In a former dispensation, it is true, he threw such an effulgence of light into the souls of holy men of God as enabled them to see, as it were, through a telescope, in the far-stretching landscape of futurity, this fountain of life yet hid in

the mind of Deity. Then, however, his operations were inspirations of truth. Then his revelations were prophetic. But now, since the system of grace has been changed from a prospective to an historical blessing, his province is not to reveal new truths, but to exhibit in those already revealed a divine power and excellency not otherwise known. This province is implied in the word, come. The Spirit says, come. But to what are we invited? To the Fountain of Life. Very true; but where is the Fountain of Life? Is it something undetermined as to character and location? Is it not the very doctrine of grace established by Christ and revealed in the Gospel? Then it is to an excellency within and not without the Gospel that the Spirit invites attention in his effectual call to sinners. He may excite a religious enthusiasm, it is true, but it is an intelligent enthusiasm restricted to the written word. He *convinces of sin*, but it is by the word of God, which, the apostle tells us, is the "sword of the spirit." He further says "that the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." He gives the Word force, acuteness and penetration, and employs it to lay open the heart that its inward corruption may be fully exposed. He further *produces faith in Christ and confidence in his atonement* by the Word. Our blessed Saviour indicates this peculiar operation of the Spirit by saying, "he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." What shall he show unto you? Not strange things

in visions. These arise rather from a disordered imagination than from the Spirit's influence. But he shall show you an excellency in the Gospel that you will be unable to account for on any other principle than that he who established it is divine. He dwells in the Word; and but little of his influence is felt in the heart when little of divine truth is lodged in the mind. We are sanctified *by* the truth, not *without* the truth. Some persons are more emotional than intelligent, and claim special spiritual influence; but they despise religious literature, and often show a want of culture by their deviations from truth and the rude manner in which they assail the mental application of less pretentious Christians whose religious characters are of a finer texture. We denounce their claims as false and unfounded. Their enthusiasm is noise without power—it is thunder without lightning.

But still, it may be insisted upon that the doctrine of the Spirit's revelation encourages virtually, if not expressly, a visionary extravagance under the name of inspiration. Or, in more definite terms, this objection may be stated thus: "If man's ordinary faculties are unable to comprehend the word, then to him it is a sealed book; then the Spirit's revelations of things which he is unable to discover in it, would, to him, be without written authority; and then, discerning no difference between these revelations and direct inspirations, he would ever be liable to run into all the licentiousness of religious fanaticism." But the Spirit does not act independently of our mental constitutions. Confined in his operations to the Gospel, he does not afford the heart a sense of its excellency

until its subject-matter is brought into the mind. The mind obtains the subject-matter of the Gospel by the same mental exercise which secures an understanding of anything else. Hence the ordinary exercise of the faculties is necessary to a spiritual illumination of the heart. But we must make a distinction between a necessary and an adequate employment of our powers. The province of reason is to perceive a speculative knowledge of the word. In this its exercise is necessary. But it could as easily perceive the sweetness of honey as the beauty and loveliness of the Word without the illumination of the Spirit. It is necessary to open the eyes to have a sense of the loveliness of a flower. But the mere opening of the eyes cannot furnish this sense. The organ of sight in nature and in function is the same in every person. But every person does not perceive the beauty of a flower. The eye opens that a notion of its organic form may enter the mind. This notion is common to all who can see. Its loveliness, however, must be perceived by the faculty of taste which is not common to all in a state of culture and refinement. Now substitute for the eyes the ordinary faculties of the mind, for the organic form of the flower the subject-matter of the Gospel, and for the taste developed by culture the moral sense awakened by the Spirit, and then you will see the analogy; then you will see how the ordinary powers of the mind are necessary and at the same time inadequate to a discovery of the beauties of divine truth. The Spirit, however, communicates himself to the soul; he invigorates those faculties yet active, and restores

those lapsed by the fall; and he then exerts himself in the very exercise of these faculties in imparting to the subject of his influence a sense of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. These faculties are set agoing as if everything depended upon their exertion; but it is the Spirit acting in them as their vital principle that leads them to a discovery of the excellency of the Gospel of Christ. This reconciles human responsibility with divine grace. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Here we are taught that you must employ your powers just as diligently as you would in securing any other result. But the exertion of your faculties, though necessary, is not sufficient to secure as a result of their efforts the salvation of your souls. "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Here we are taught that God works when you work—that he exerts himself in the necessary but inadequate employment of your powers—and that therefore your sufficiency is of him, and your salvation of grace. Then, the Spirit's operations in illuminating our souls with saving truth are rational, though the power he imparts to our inadequate faculties is supernatural. We do not deem it necessary to furnish here more than two illustrations of his method of communications, as, indeed, they are the same we would employ in explaining his influence in relation to all the other vital doctrines of revelation.

We must have a knowledge of the law before we can feel a stirring conviction of sin leading to a reformation of life. Our ordinary powers can lodge

in the mind this knowledge, but they cannot produce in the heart this conviction. A man, by mere mental effort, may perceive the law in all its relations; he may sanction its just and inflexible requirements; and he may by the operations of his conscience acting without any special light, obtain intimations of his moral delinquency, and yet he may feel but little alarm. The natural voice of both reason and conscience may be stifled by the turbulency of depraved passions. He may know that this law was received from the mouth of Jehovah himself, who spoke out of the blackness and darkness and tempest, out of the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai; he may know that there is a divinity stamped upon every word of its awful declarations, and yet he may feel none of its terrific majesty. But if the Spirit exert himself in his reason and conscience and so awaken his moral sensibilities that he may feel how near, how awful, how potent and how stern in his demands is Jehovah, then he will "exceedingly fear and quake." If the Spirit reveal to him the depth of meaning, the searching power of the law, then he will be convinced of the criminality of even his most hidden thoughts. If the Spirit make him sensible of the holiness and loveliness of his Maker blazing amid other attributes stamped upon the law, then he will loathe sin and thirst for the water of life.

Faith in Christ as the true Messiah, and confidence in the sufficiency of his doctrines are gifts of the Spirit. But in bestowing these gifts he acts in unison with the active principles of man's mental constitution. The idiot whose faculties are locked up by the hand of nature, and the heathen who has never

been favored with a single Gospel truth to employ his perceptive powers, cannot, under these disabilities, become recipients of a saving faith in Christ. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" But mental exertions, though necessary, are not adequate to this faith. You may by your ordinary powers acquaint yourselves with all the facts of the Gospel; you may by a mere attention to the leading traits in the history of Christ, perceive the impossibility that a being so meek, so good, so pure, so strong in miraculous power, and so far removed from every appearance of disguise, could be an imposter, as he had often been called by the Jews. You may even set him up as a model of virtue and bend to him an outward conformity of life, and yet you may know as little of a saving faith arising from a sense of the excellency of the Gospel as the man who never heard the name of Jesus. You may increase your already extensive accomplishments in learning by the additional truths of the Bible; you may speak as fluently and as eloquently about the deep things in theology as you do about those belonging to any other science, and yet you may know nothing about the power of divine truth, nothing about its sweetness, nothing about its transforming and sanctifying influences. There is a preciousness in the Gospel that "flesh and blood" cannot reveal; a preciousness that is often "hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes;" a preciousness that often elevates above the learned philosopher the most illiterate person, who could have no faith at all, if it depended upon deep biblical researches or long processes of logical reasoning. This preciousness

the Spirit reveals. He enables the soul to "*taste and see* that the Lord is good" in this divine arrangement. O, what a delightful feast is this which the Spirit entertains the heart! "It is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." The knowledge upon which saving faith is based is not speculative, but is derived from *tasting* "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." A sense of this glory so destroys the prejudices of the heart, so fastens the attention of the mind, so enlivens and cheers on the faculties in the most delightful employment, and sends into the soul such a conviction that a Gospel so lovely cannot be less than divine, as to transform immediately the subject of the Spirit's influence into a most willing and devout believer. In this way the Spirit gives saving faith which may be called a faith of the heart, in contradistinction to an intellectual assent to truth. O, could we all only see the Gospel as it is radiated by the Spirit, our souls would be filled with such ineffable love as would banish every unholy feeling; and then in some future sorrow—perhaps in the chamber of death—we could cheer our hearts by calling up in memory the day when this light bursted into our souls, and we could sing—

"'Twas a heaven below
My Redeemer to know;
And the angels could do nothing more
Than to fall at his feet
And the story repeat,
And the lover of sinners adore.

"Jesus all the day long
Was my joy and my song.
O, that all his salvation might see!

He hath loved me, I cried,
He hath suffered and died
To redeem such a rebel as me."

In summing up this argument, we again invite attention to the distinction between a general and an effectual call of the Spirit. In a general call he imparts to the mind a *knowledge* of the letter or subject-matter of the Gospel, by means which he employs and sanctifies for this purpose. In an effectual call he imparts to the heart a *sense* of the spirit or excellency of the Gospel, by his direct agency. His special call is carried on within that which is general. He works like a wheel in a wheel. He throws light upon something within and not without the mind; and we must look within and not without our souls for his revelations which produce the light of faith. Therefore, since our ordinary powers are able to understand the literal meaning of divine truth, the Bible is not set aside as useless by a mental incompetency to apprehend in it a hidden excellency which the Spirit alone can reveal. And further, since, the province of the Spirit is to reveal truths only *within* the Bible, there is no license granted an unbridled fanaticism to seek *without* direct spiritual manifestations in rapt trances or strange visions. It is not to be understood that the Spirit never takes advantage of afflicting dispensations to press home to our consciences truths before known but woefully neglected. Nor is it to be understood that he does not sometimes intrude upon our most busy moments, when our thoughts are least engaged with religious subjects, to admonish us and call up into our minds—or "bring to our remembrance"—

truths of the most momentous importance. But in his effectual call he always works within the province of the Scriptures. We have thus extensively dwelt upon the Spirit's effectual call that God, and not man, may be seen as the principal actor in the work of regeneration.

But the other objection to the doctrine of the Spirit's effectual influences is, that it excludes human agency. What? Excludes human agency? Look at that grain of wheat! Who made it? You certainly did not. You could as easily make a world as a grain of wheat. You could not help to make it. You could not make even the delicate wrappers which enveloped, protected and nourished it while growing. You could not be even a proximate cause of its creation. You were not a conductor of atmospheric influence. The sun did not shine through you upon the field in which it grew. You could not, by your efforts, bring rain from heaven to nourish its roots. It was made by the direct agencies of nature. Is human agency excluded in all this? Will you fold your arms, and say, "O, if nature must do the work, she may then make all the wheat she can, and I will have nothing to do but feast upon her bounties!" As tillers of the ground, you know that while you cannot make wheat, you cannot obtain wheat without your personal agency. You know you must put your seed wheat into the ground, and remove obstructions to nature's influences while she is conducting the processes of generation and development, before you can reap a fruitful harvest. It is true, nature does the work; and so independently of man's agency does she work, that her operations are going on while he is

sleeping, resting from his toil, or pursuing his journey to a distant country. But her work is not a miraculous growth of a harvest from nothing. She works in a suitably prepared soil, from a germ containing the principle of vegetation, which, under her several influences, swells, and sprouts, and grows, and ripens into a luxuriant crop of wheat. She also indulges man by furnishing him with soil and the seed that must be cast into it. But she will indulge him no further. She will not give his fields so violent a shaking as will loosen and pulverize their soil. She will not arrange to have seed-wheat cast from the sun in rays of light or dropped from the clouds in showers of rain. Here comes in human agency. The farmer must prepare the ground and deposit into it the seed nature furnishes him from her former productions. Hence you see that while it is true that nature does the work, furnishes the agencies of sunlight, atmosphere, showers and refreshing dews, and the material upon which these agencies are to operate, it is also true that if man does not work he must suffer all the pains of starvation. So it is in the spiritual husbandry. The work of grace in its incipency and several stages of development is the result of the immediate agency of the Spirit. But the influence of the Spirit in this work is not more absolute than are those of nature in the process of vegetation. Like in nature, this work does not vegetate from nothing. There must also be a germ planted in the soul containing the rudiment of a new and spiritual life, which, under the quickening influence of the Spirit, shoots forth, sends its roots deep into the heart, spreads its fibres over the affections

and then grows up, exhibiting "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The germ of grace is the word of God. It is true, the Spirit furnishes this germ, but he does not plant it. He does not send it into the soul along with his direct influences. The Word is the fruit of the Spirit obtained from a former dispensation, as the seed-wheat is the growth of a former season. But, though it contains a hidden principle of life, it will not germinate while stowed in some neglected corner of the library. It must be lodged into the mind before the Spirit can produce from it the fruits of righteousness. This man must do. Hence human agency is no more set aside in the spiritual than in the natural husbandry. It is left for man to acquire a knowledge of the Word by the exercise of his ordinary faculties; it is left for him to exert his persuasive powers in bringing others into the sanctuary where the truth may be deposited into their hearts, and it is left for him to throw his whole soul into those missionary enterprises which are so actively engaged in imparting a knowledge of the Word to the benighted minds of pagan countries, that "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, may shine into their hearts to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Certainly, in all this there is no setting aside of human agency. If we cannot make the seed, we can certainly plant it. If we cannot carry on the process of spiritual vegetation, we can at least pray for the increase. This thought introduces the other messengers specified in our text, whose office it is to bring the Fountain of Life to the notice of a perishing world.

THE MESSENGERS WHOSE OFFICE IS TO SAY, COME.

THE BRIDE'S CALL.

THE BRIDE is a metaphorical name for the Church, and it sets forth the endearing relation she sustains to her beloved Redeemer. Here the topic of *the relation of the Church to the calls of grace* is introduced under the most tender metaphor. What finer touch could be given our subject to set forth the eagerness with which the Church unites with the Spirit in inviting sinners to Christ than the expression, *the Bride says, Come?* The Bride sees excellencies in her beloved that are hid from others. To her he is the chief among ten thousand; to others he is only an ordinary man. To her he is the one altogether lovely; to others his virtues are often concealed, and only his blemishes are seen. She thinks every person should see as she sees, and often betrays a sensitiveness that her husband's excellencies should pass under such general neglect. From a heart swelling with the most tender sentiments toward the idol of her affections, gushes a copious stream of praise which others, less sentimental, meet with the same chiding inquiry the daughters of Jerusalem proposed to the Spouse, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" So the Church—the "Lamb's

wife"—sees divine beauties in her beloved that are overlooked by the world—beauties which she delights to cherish and exhibit to others.

Having opened the spiritual eyes of the Church upon the divine glory of the Redeemer, it is but natural that the Spirit would then unite her with himself, as a subordinate agent, in publishing the Gospel in his general call to the world. The Spirit employs her, because it is her greatest pleasure to advance a cause which engages her warmest affections. There is that triumphant Soldier! Why not employ him to conquer an obedience to Christ? There are those philosophers and those orators of Greece and Rome! Why not turn to advantage their metaphysics and their eloquence in the diffusion of the Gospel? The Spirit will not accept the services of those who act from motives of ambition, nor the praises of those who demand a price for their reluctant eulogies of the Lamb. But there is the Bride. Her bosom swells with love to her Redeemer. She needs no ambitious motive, no tongue of oratory to speak the praises of him whom her soul loves. His praises gush as naturally from her heart as the stream flows from the fountain; and to her the Spirit looks, and in her he finds an agent in full sympathy with him in his work of grace, who feels a peculiar propriety in everything relating to the glory of her Redeemer, and rejoices on every occasion when his excellencies are shown to the world. She takes pleasure in presenting her beloved to the world, but is pained to see him so frequently neglected. His beauty, his wisdom and his love, so dear to her own heart, often fail

to arrest attention or excite admiration when brought to the dull and sordid gaze of others. When she has invited attention to the one precious to her heart, she has reached the limit of her influence. She cannot tear from the soul the veil of insensibility that prevents others from seeing his beauties. Others must be let into these beauties, as she was, by the immediate agency of the Spirit.

There is nothing, then, in the mission of the Bride that contradicts what was said before about the universal agency of the Spirit in bringing the Fountain of Life to the notice of a fallen race. There can be no dispute arising between the Spirit and the Bride as to whose particular influence should have the credit of a sinner's conversion. There can be no collision with the functions of the Spirit, no lapping over his province by the Bride when she says, Come. It is still true that the unaided powers of human intellect are incompetent to promulgate this message of good will to man. It is still true that the Spirit has under his superintendency this benevolent arrangement. All difficulties, however, vanish when we are told that the Bride is an instrument of the Spirit—that the copulative conjunction brings her alongside of the Spirit, not as an independent and rival, but as a subordinate and instrumental messenger, whose pleasant duty it is to bring a knowledge of the Gospel into the mind, that the Spirit thence may convey a sense of its excellency into the heart through the Spiritual eyes which he alone can open in the soul. The Bride opens the intellectual eyes upon the Fountain of Life; the Spirit excites the

sensibilities of the heart, and enables it to taste its hidden virtues. The Bride supplies the place of the "gift of tongues" on the day of Pentecost. She translates the Scriptures into the many vernacular tongues of the world, and then conveys a knowledge of them through the medium of language into the minds of persons of all nationalities. The Spirit, however, addresses himself to the affections in that peculiar dialect known to all who are favored with his precious communications. In all this there is no clashing of functions. In this discourse, we shall, first, bestow a few remarks upon the character of the Church; secondly, illustrate more fully her several methods of inviting sinners to Christ; and, thirdly, show how the Church triumphant co-operates with the Church militant in saying, come.

1. The Church is essentially a holy institution. Place, for a moment, if you please, the emphasis upon the term, *Bride*. It will be interesting to notice the facts and the philosophy of the facts wrapped up in this term. The "*Bride* says, Come." There is a mystical union between Christ and the Church, of which the conjugal relation is but an imperfect type. Christ rejoices over the Church as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride. She is as dear to him as the apple of his eye. He has highly distinguished her above all others, in choosing her as his bosom companion. He might have selected from some other world a bride of greater dignity and glory. But he clothed himself in flesh, he levelled himself so as to be a suitable companion of the inhabitants of earth,

and then received to his precious bosom a bride from the wilderness of this comparatively small globe. He affords her many intimations of his love. He died for her on Calvary; he intercedes for her in heaven; and he has prepared for her a mansion beyond the skies. He nourishes her soul with divine knowledge; he clothes her character with heavenly graces; he fortifies her in raging temptations; he comforts her in painful afflictions; he leads her, reclining on his arm, over the slippery path of life; and at last in their home over there he will receive her to his bosom and will wipe all tears from her eyes. The Holy Spirit dwells in her. He opened her eyes to see the loveliness of her Redeemer; he consummated the joyful union to which she was elected; and he ornaments her with spiritual gifts which make her so precious in the eyes of her beloved.

Holiness of character appears as a necessary result of this union. Holiness is not an intrinsic element of human nature, depending, like some latent power of the mind, upon an ordinary process of culture for its development. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Nor is it the gift of a direct revelation. But it is transmitted from the Fountain of moral purity to a susceptible nature by contact. Of all beings clothed in flesh, Jesus Christ alone possessed holiness as a cardinal element of his nature. Hence, when the heart receives him, it has in him an indwelling holiness which will blend with the affections and show itself in an elevation of character. But in the science of grace, as well as in the science

of chemistry, there are things which will not inhere. A fellowship between Christ and Baal is just as impossible as the assimilation of incompatible gases. If such be the antagonism of our hearts they must in some way be influenced before a spiritual affinity can be produced. This the Spirit does, not by making them holy that they may entertain a holy Saviour, but by first making them capable of entertaining a holy Saviour, that he may make them holy. The Spirit's work is to make them receptive by slaying their enmity and emptying them of every incompatible affection. When they are thus subdued, emptied and fitted for the Saviour, then he will at once enter them with all the facts and doings of his life, both on earth and in heaven; then he will enter them, not only as a sin-atonement sacrifice, but in all his entireness as the Fountain of truth and life and purity; and then a receptive humanity imbibing life from an indwelling divinity will develop in the Church a character of holiness which will ever increase because of its connection with a never-failing source of purifying influences. The union between Christ and the Church implies all this, or it implies nothing. Without this result it must be a forced union, or a partial union embracing but one or more of the cardinal facts of the blessed Saviour's work at the exclusion of all the merits of his spotless character. A union on either of these hypotheses is impossible. It is true, through mercenary motives, forced unions are sometimes formed in society, but they are always unhappy, and often ruinous to families. We cannot with a greater impunity violate our

emotional than we can our physical and mental constitutions. In either case punishment follows as a necessary result. The heart cannot be forced to love. It must love spontaneously or not at all. A formal matrimony cannot be a crucible in which you may melt together opposite tastes, desires and affections. It is true gold has often attempted this impossible thing, but the frequent fatal explosions in society resulting from such trials should convince every one that the principles governing our affections cannot be violated with impunity. The union between Christ and his Church is affectionate, or it is nothing. Tell me not that the Son of God would marry a bride who would withhold from him her affections, and bestow them upon things "earthly, sensual, devilish." His bride must be chaste; and, to be chaste, she must be holy. It is true, a mercenary union, while it cannot blend incompatible tempers, may settle upon an incongenial partner a title to valuable possessions. This partial union illustrates the partial conceptions some have of salvation. Although, selfish and incongruous, although accompanied with a misery that the glitter of wealth will not always conceal, it furnishes the only principle upon which many build their hopes of heaven. They, indeed, desire a union with Christ so far as securing a title to heaven is concerned, but they have no taste, no concern for a union with his holy character through which alone a meetness for heaven is secured. Suppose it were possible in the economy of grace for a man to select from the facts belonging to the life and redemptive work of Christ his vicarious sufferings

which in the abstract would only afford a legal discharge from the claims of the law and a title to the bliss of heaven, and then, to reject all others, especially the moral purity of the God-man, as incongenial with his affections, would he not, after all, have only a splendid title to an endless misery? His condition would now be that of a person who marries for a titled estate and not for domestic pleasure. He now, indeed, would have a title to heaven; but, without a meetness, what kind of heaven? We know not what the surrounding attractions of heaven are as a location. It is not important that we should know, since misery may sparkle with diamonds and recline in palaces on couches of finest drapery. The happiness of spiritual beings mainly depends upon social congeniality. It is enough to know that heaven is distinguished rather as a state of unmixed holiness, in order to be convinced that its characteristic principles would as utterly fail in satisfying the tastes of unregenerated natures in heaven as they so obviously do on earth, and that they would even starve such natures indirectly by surrounding them with such an abundance of pure enjoyments as would allow no space for those sinful indulgences necessary to satisfy their unsubdued cravings. Unsanctified persons on earth feel an aversion to those very principles which make up the character of that blissful region. They are in hell when in the society of those who are enjoying foretastes of heaven. They, however, may find other associations and other pleasures. But to be cut off from all these with unholy cravings as acute as ever,

and to be placed in a region full of the purest pleasure would, indeed, be the consummation of their misery.

“And, O, what man’s condition can be worse
Than his whom blessings starve and blessings curse?”

Besides, heaven would cease to be the abode of un-mixed purity and love the moment a titled unholiness would be admitted within its portals. O, tell me not that the Son of God would wreck the pure character of heaven in order to bestow upon his bride a title to an incongenial heaven. At this very point we insist upon holiness as not only a privileged, but necessary character of the Church. The union Christ forms with his saints is not forced and unsuited, not selfish and partial, not the union of a nature angling with Christ in only one benefit of his redemptive work, and diverging from all others, but it is a union with him in all that he ever was or did in the flesh, in all that he now is or does in heaven. It is a union that brings the whole moral constitution in contact with him as the embodiment of holiness, and not the conscience alone with him as the propitiatory sacrifice. How, then, can the nature of Christ be within our natures without purifying them? How can the Bride be in a union so mutually sought and strongly cemented, so thoroughly imbued with a spotless righteousness brought into contact with a destitute but receptive nature, and so tenderly cherished with most valuable displays of divine love and a constant flow of reciprocal affections, without wearing the graces, without sharing the purity, without reflecting

the moral grandeur of her Beloved? It is true, she does not claim the perfections of angels whose natures and devotions were never tainted with sin. She is painfully sensible of the constitutional foibles ever clinging to her and reminding her of her nativity and earthly relations. But these facts which greatly humble her are not secrets locked up in her own breast, lest their discovery should startle her Beloved and alienate his affections. He is acquainted with them in all their repugnancy. "He knoweth her frame; he remembereth that she is dust;" and he is not disappointed because the bride he selected from earth is destitute of those perfections he would expect of a bride selected from heaven. These constitutional frailties, though known in all their repulsiveness, were no impediment to the union he formed with her, and, therefore, they are no contradiction to a state of holiness depending solely upon this union and not upon any inherent force of the will. A knowledge of these frailties even increases the adhesiveness of this union and is thus favorable to the conditions of a holy life. It produces in the Bride humility; in the Beloved, pity. These are the two cardinal elements of holiness. Humility empties the heart; pity fills it. Humility increases love, because the heart attaches a greater value to blessings bestowed when it feels less worthy of them. Pity, which is always attracted by distress, becomes more urgent in bestowing relief as that distress becomes more keenly felt, more frankly confessed, and more importunate for relief. O, it is a glorious truth entering into the most sensitive part of our natures,

that "like as a father pitieth his children," so the Beloved pitieth his Bride as she sits there in all her self-abasement weeping over infirmities which make her so unworthy of the love he so richly bestows. As a consequence of this holiness—

The Church is essentially a missionary institution. "The Bride says, *Come.*" It is not here predicated of the Bride that she *may* or *should* say, *Come*, but most absolutely that she *does* say, *Come*. It is as fundamentally the nature of the Church to say, *Come*, as it is the nature of birds to sing. The effect of her relation to Christ is, on her part, to enumerate his excellencies, as the spouse in the Canticles did those of her beloved to the daughters of Jerusalem, and to feel a mutual interest for the success of that cause for which he poured out his love upon the world. The effect of his giving himself to her, and of his making her the object of his special bestowment of grace, is, on her part, to lay herself and all her possessions at his feet for the advancement of his kingdom. The spouse sings: "My Beloved is mine, and I am his"—"I am his, not merely as a sentimental bride, delighting only in his caresses, but as an earnest worker for the promotion of his honor among men—I am his by an espousal that throws upon his altar my dearest possessions as a feeble return for his special goodness in giving himself to me in a union that the crash of worlds cannot dissolve." The effect of her relation to the Spirit as her inward illuminator is to see what he sees, to love what he loves, to desire what he desires, and to co-operate with him in every movement relating to the glory of her Re-

deemer. It is true, other reasons may influence a fashionable church to say, Come. She may say to that man of wealth: "Come! your money will be of service to us in decorating our temple;" to that man of letters: "Come! your attainments will elevate our literary standing;" and to that man of honor: "Come! your reputation will give us character and influence in the community." O think of it! *Your reputation will give us character and influence in the community!* As if Christ, by marrying the Church, did not bestow upon her a more brilliant character than was ever bestowed upon any institution, human or divine. But the true Church receives her missionary motives from her spiritual alliance with Christ. Satisfied with the glory this alliance confers upon her, she desires only that the glory of her Redeemer be revealed to the world—that his efficacy be seen in the salvation of sinners. She invites sinners to Christ that they may receive, not that they may give character. Hence she says, Come, to that beggar in his rags, or to that profligate wallowing in his own degradation. The church that does not missionate is not espoused to Christ. If she present the plea that she has enough to do to attend to her home interests, she will find before long that she will have no home interests to attend to. There is no Christ, there is no Spirit, there is nothing in her to save her from the fate of everything that passeth away.

2. The Church, then, being a holy and, consequently, a missionary institution, we shall next

furnish illustrations of her persuasive influence over the world. We have so arranged these illustrations that her influence may be seen gradually increasing in directness from that which she mutely exerts in her behavior to that loud and earnest call she gives through the active missionary enterprises of the day. It may be said that we give the church too bright a coloring, and the illustrations we will give may seem to exhibit the influence of an imaginary church, rather than of such as we find in actual existence, since many professors of religion, by their private behavior, retard church progress, and are such intense lovers of money that their missionary contributions, given for the sake of decency, are always accompanied with a growl. "How can you," it may be asked, "bring together in one institution the ardent desires of the bride and the grudging services of the professor?" To this we would reply that there always have been persons enrolled in the Church record who were never espoused to Christ, who form no essential element of the Church, and who shall not be included in the view we shall give of her intrinsic influence. The object of this discourse is to show that the Church in her essential nature says, Come, and to furnish illustrations of this truth. The calls of the Church are clear and distinct, though their effect upon the world is greatly damaged by the discordancies of false professors. The music of the nightingale in its own nature is sweet, though its effect upon the ear may be impaired by the croaking, grumbling sound of the raven. But you would describe its music just as it is in its native

sweetness. Who would think of mixing its melody with other unpleasant sounds with which it may be associated in the forest, and then describe it according to the effect this mixture would produce on the ear? So we shall describe the calls of the Church in their own native distinctness; but as our illustrations will exclude the disagreeable appearances so visible to the world and so constantly attending, though no part of the church, we will not wonder that these illustrations should seem more visionary than real.

(1) The bride says, Come, by the influence of her character. This call is most mute and indirect, though exerting a powerful influence over the world. Solomon says that "a virtuous woman is a crown to her husband." If the results of her conjugal relation are an improvement of disposition, an elevation of character, an adornment of mind, a chastity that will admit no breach of honor, a devotedness that will look well to her husband's peace and prosperity, a fondness that will cultivate the little olive plants growing up around her table, and a tenderness that will drop a tear, breathe a secret prayer and extend a hand of mercy to the poor of the community—if these be the results of her conjugal relation—then she is said to have contracted a very fortunate alliance. She raises with her own the reputation of him who has chosen her; she invites to him the notice of every lover of character, and "her husband is known in the gates when he sitteth among the elders of the land." These elements of character, praiseworthy in themselves, appear more fully matured in

the Church. Here they are absolutely the results of a mystical union with Christ. Now, if, as the development of an earthly union, they reflect honor upon an earthly husband, why then, as the development of a spiritual union, should they not also reflect honor upon our blessed Redeemer? Only grant me that intelligence and purity of character, a fidelity to the interest and honor of a partner in wedlock, a regard for the culture and well-being of those under one's care, and a benevolence that stretches out a hand of relief to every species of human woe, are virtues that of themselves are everywhere commended, then I see a tongue in the character of the Church that most distinctly and most persuasively says, Come, to poor famishing humanity. There is a divinity in this call. In this, as in the other illustrations we shall furnish, the voice of the Church is the voice of God. The Spirit effected this union; this union gives character; this character gives influence; this influence invites sinners to the Saviour of the world. The Spirit, through the Bride, says, Come.

(2) The Bride says come by her songs of praise. This call is also indirect. In fact, this exercise is purely sentimental. In this exercise the Church closes out all thoughts about others, and dwells entirely upon her Redeemer. In this exercise she is brought into a closer union with him; her affections grow from a nearer view of his love, and her faculties are unfolded and strengthened by contemplating the divine excellencies that are now so vividly spread out before the soul. Thus, in her inward solitude, while reflecting upon her Redeemer and

adoring his excellencies, she is unconsciously preparing her heart and active powers for a most vigorous and direct call to sinners. Besides, her music is captivating. The Bride, in her lonely walk, while strolling among wild flowers, or sitting under the willow by the flowing stream, is thinking of him only to whom she has given her affections. She is singing, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine; he feedeth among the lilies." The charm of her music attracts to the spot, where her thoughts as well as her person are secluded from the world, an unobserved listener, who catches her sentiment, and is at once interested in the happy one who has opened in the heart given to him alone such a fountain of melody. The Church, by her songs of praise, attracts persons into the sanctuary who become interested in the sentiments sung, and are often captured by truth when opposing passions are for the time subdued by the charms of sacred harmony. It is a homage paid to the power of music that the blandishments of vice are illustrated by the dulcet song of the fabled siren which arrests the mariner, who, forgetting his home and his enterprise, dies in an ecstasy of delight on an island of the Mediterranean. If such, then, is the power of music, why may not the sweet melody of the sacred minstrel arrest the sinner in his waywardness, and, as it were, allure him into the way of life? Music, by its magic power, lulls the ferocious passions and lifts from the soul a tyranny that is accustomed to smother out the least risings of pious impulses. It raises in the breast emotions which, for the time disencumbered, glow

most freely with the sentiment it conveys; it restores to reason her throne, and cheers on her powers by the stimulus of transporting feelings; and it then invites truth to take advantage of the momentary calm of those passions which would resist its advances, and steal, under the wings of harmony, into the soul, when the enraptured affections and the invigorated faculties will give it a hearty and candid reception. Even the prophets of old understood the utility of music in preparing the soul for the reception of truth conveyed by inspiration. When the soul is thrown into disorder and confusion by the passions, it will not so readily receive the impressions of the Spirit. When the prophet Elisha had been requested to ask counsel of God in an emergency, he was irritated at seeing among his petitioners the idolatrous King of Israel. Therefore, before he could make a discovery of the Divine will he called for a minstrel, that the soothing power of music might compose his feelings, clear his reason of every bias, and make it receptive of the Spirit's impressions. Sacred music must not, however, supplant the preaching of the Word. The song must not be considered a better conveyance of truth than the sermon. We behold with apprehension the encroachments of the choir upon the pulpit, and fear that the sacred discourse, already shorn of much of its strength by the limited time allowed its delivery, will finally be reduced to a mere nominal exercise of the sanctuary. Music can never convert the world. Nor must we mistake the enthusiasm raised by melody for the more thorough and permanent impressions of the Spirit. It is true,

“music hath charms to sooth the savage breast,” but they are only transient. Often they are broken as soon as the last cadence dies in the ear, and the passions, rising up in all their ferocity from the spell which held them, bring again the heart and the mind under a tyranny as unrelenting as ever. Still it is a great achievement if truth enter the soul at all, even though it be insinuated into the affections by the charms of music but for a moment, when every opposition is lulled into a state of non-resistance. The Spirit taking advantage of these transient impressions, often vitalizes the truth thus conveyed, enroots it into the heart, and develops it into a new and spiritual life.

But the enthusiasm directly raised in the sinner, though it may afford the Spirit an opportunity to fasten truth in his heart, is the least benefit he derives from sacred music. According to the thought which introduced this topic, sacred music is chiefly intended for the Church, and the benefits it indirectly confers upon the sinner, through the Christian zeal and activity it promotes, are far more important than the casual emotions of piety it awakens in the unregenerated heart. We fear that many overlook the precise point in which sacred music is important in relation to the great work of calling sinners to Christ. Our fear arises not so much from the neglect of music as from the spirit and manner in which it is generally discoursed in worshiping assemblies. The fashionable and expensive displays of sacred music so prevalent at present, in trying to please an audience, sacrifice the sweet, simple and pathetic sounds

so consonant with religious feelings, for the musical swells, labryinths and explosions so suited to a frolicsome taste; and in overlooking piety, which they were intended to promote, they defeat at once the pious emotions they should directly raise in the heart, and the greater influences they should indirectly exert over the unconverted. Besides, their expensiveness interferes with the direct and divinely appointed methods of inviting sinners to Christ. We hope, then, we may be pardoned for dwelling so long on this topic, since it is necessary to know precisely *how* sacred music ranks among the other methods by which the Bride says, Come.

Sacred music is an exercise of the Church, and is intended for her spiritual improvement. In devotion it ranks with prayer, and is subject to the same restrictions. The Church, though she allows all to pray, does not delegate the duty of conducting her prayers to a class of persons chosen rather for their fluency of speech than for their intense breathings of piety. Why, then, should she allow her songs of praise, alike devotional, to be executed by persons whose chief recommendation is, that they are skilful musicians? The *Church* says, Come, by her songs of praise, not a choir of singers which may be, and often is, composed of thoughtless and unconverted persons. Church music is church music, and not the music in a church of the votaries of the world, who would carry with them as much religion as they do in the sanctuary were they to go and display their musical skill in the theatre. Sacred music is sentimental in its nature. It expresses, in sweet and

melting tones, the emotions of pity, and is as retired, so far as the thoughts of the worshiper is concerned, as his secret devotions with which it is allied. The bride, in her lonely walk, sings, not to be heard, but to give vent to her secret emotions while thinking of her beloved. The casual effect of her music is that an unobserved listener becomes interested in the one whose praises she so sweetly celebrates in her solitude. Would she appoint a stranger to sing her song of love? Why, then, will the Church employ others to do her singing? As well might she employ others to do her thinking and her praying, or to feel in her stead the emotions of praise and gratitude. Sacred music is also intended for the Christian's improvement, and not for the sinner's entertainment. It is the language of praise which, besides being the most pleasant part of devotion, is attended with the most practical results. It loosens the thoughts from self and the world, and raises them into a higher sphere, where the excellencies of God, now appearing so near and so glorious, increase the affections, engage and strengthen the faculties, and promote a spirit of consecration which infuses itself with an increased mental vigor into every practical service of our Redeemer. In this way the sinner is chiefly benefited by sacred music. He may, indeed, for the time feel the elevations of this music, especially since it is infused with the fervor of piety; but his greatest benefits are indirectly obtained through the zeal it kindles and promotes in the Church. Sacred music benefits him more permanently by resolving itself into arguments, entreaties and invocations for the

Spirit's influence in his behalf. The Bride says, Come, *indirectly*, and not *directly*, by her songs of praise. When the minister announces the hymn, and all begin to sing; when from warm hearts the music rolls upward "in thoughts that breathe and words that burn;" when every eye sparkles with delight and every countenance glows with the sentiment sung—there is then in sacred song something so living, so stirring, so earnest, that the sinner often feels more than the gratification of a musical taste, that, while agreeable sounds thrill upon his ear, an intense interest draws him to that precious Redeemer who has kindled in so many hearts such a "flame of sacred love." Better still, this music indicates, and, at the same time, cherishes and improves a zeal which will show itself in pointed and urgent calls to the unconverted. This is the precise point in which music becomes an important method of church influence.

But the other theory, that sacred music is intended for a display, does not secure these results. It is a singular truth that the sinner receives greater benefits from sacred music when it is not intended for his entertainment than when it is. Efforts to make an impression, even a religious impression, upon the mind by the fascinations of harmony often defeat their own end, since the workings of this policy tend to relieve the Church from the pleasant and profitable exercise of singing the songs of Zion. Now, the taste of sinners must be consulted and provided for; what was intended to aid devotion must be turned into a musical banquet; Genius, and not Grace, must be the presiding deity; a hired musician must lead

the singers ; a costly instrument must guide the vocal sounds ; in short, no expense must be spared to bring sacred music down on a level with a theatrical performance. Sacred music thus lowered may, indeed, be an artistic success, and may regale the most refined ear with its melody. So may the orchestra. It, however, lacks the fervor of piety which would pour itself into the sinner's heart, and stir up an interest in the sacred theme far deeper than that produced by the mere loveliness of a song. But what may we say of the Church as she sits there indolently looking on, while others are doing the singing which belongs to her as really as warbling belongs to birds on the branches ? She has hung her harps upon the willows ; she has employed, perchance, Babylonians to sing in her stead the Lord's song, if not in a strange land, at least in a strange and difficult air ; and she, therefore, wears an expression of cold indifference, which chills and repels those whom she should pursue with the yearnings of a most ardent zeal. We allow, some feel twinges of conscience that they have so graciously given their songs of praise to persons who may feel no emotions of praise. Still they look on complacently, and have probably quieted the inward reprover by a compromise with the choir, which they thus state : " You'll do the singing, and we'll do the praising." This is nearly as sensible as if a man, overwhelmed with sorrow, should employ a proxy to give an outward expression to a grief he himself does not feel, and should say to him : " You'll do the crying and I'll do the sighing." We are not opposed to the study of music as a sci-

ence, nor to those exercises which improve the voice and bring out all the capabilities of harmony. But music in the Church has another significance. The language which clothes our petitions is also a science; but who would employ the rhetorician to play off his skill in the prayers of the sanctuary? While devotion is entitled to the graces of both these sciences, its spirit must not be compromised by its being made an occasion to display rhetorical and musical perfections. In sacred exercises, pure, simple and appropriate words and tones should be used, through which the spirit of devotion may smoothly flow in all its purity, in all its sweetness, and in all its solemnity. Sacred music, then, belongs to the Church; it relates to her inward experience and promotes her zeal and spiritual strength; and its reduction to a mere fashionable and expensive display would be followed with a corresponding indolence, lifeless formality and cold selfishness, which would bestow upon the sinner but little thought and little effort for his salvation.

Again, the expense of this fashionable system of church music interferes with direct and divinely appointed methods of saying, *Come*. The more money a church bestows upon taste, the less she will be able to bestow upon practical efforts. When church music is brought into competition with church work as a candidate for our surplus money, it will not be difficult to decide which should have the preference. The Church was not intended to be a place of entertainment. It is a practical, a missionary institution. The Bride says, *Come*. I would make this the

motto of the infant Church which Providence has placed under our fostering care. I would sink and fix it into her heart as the controlling principle of her Christian activity, ever teaching her that her prosperity, yea, her life and her future glory, depend upon her efforts to lead souls to the fountain of life. Is it right, then, to bestow upon mere sensibility and taste the money so necessary to carry to the unconverted the truth in all its pungent and reformatory power? But sacred music is divinely authorized. This is true. But sacred music is one thing, and the fashionable music so pompously displayed in many of our churches is another. Even sacred music, in its relation to the evangelical efforts of the Church, is only an auxiliary to more efficient and divinely appointed methods of calling sinners, which cannot be sustained without money. Is it right, then, to lavish our money upon a method that is but subordinate and indirect, when such urgent demands are made upon our liberality to sustain those that are principal and direct? But again, sacred music, as was said before, must be conducted by the Church in order to make its greatest impressions upon the unconverted; and since the Church is composed of Christians, she will feel it a distinguished privilege to sing the praises of God, and will ask no greater recompense than the natural gratification which accompanies its performance. Is it right, then, to make a branch of devotion expensive which can be sustained in all its cheerfulness without cost, when there are missionary enterprises languishing for the want of money? This determines the point of my objec-

tion to instrumental music in churches. My objection hinges on the *cost* of instruments, and not on anything in their tones incompatible with a true spirit of devotion. David praised God with a harp, and instrumental music was an element in the temple worship. But circumstances did not then exist which now make it so objectionable. The Fountain of Life had not then been opened; the Spirit had not then entered upon his mission; the Bride had not then entered into a union with her Beloved; and to proclaim his glory agencies had not then been in operation demanding the money that had been expended in instruments of music. But what was then a prospective glory is now an established fact. The River of Life bursting from Calvary is carrying gladness in its course, and the Spirit and the Bride are busy in proclaiming its virtues to every nation and every habitation of a famishing world. In an age so stirring and practical no Christian church can afford to purchase musical instruments while money is needed to invite souls to Christ. Music should be an assistance, not a hindrance, to direct missionary efforts. Having explained how the bride says, Come, by her songs of praise, we will pass to another method of church influence.

(3) The Bride says, Come, by her prayers. In this exercise we discover the first glimpse of a direct call, though it is not distinctly of this nature. Prayer, as a mere petitionary exercise, exerts only an indirect influence. Like praise, it improves the Christian character, and indirectly benefits the unconverted by invigorating the spiritual life of the Church. Even

when attention is fastened upon sinners as the special objects of our petitions, their conversion is not the immediate result of prayer, but of the agency of the Holy Spirit given in answer to prayer. But prayer is very incomplete when it terminates in mere petitionary language. It is an intense desire seen in corresponding efforts, as well as in suppliant addresses to Jehovah. David says: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I *seek* after." It is in this complete sense that we discover a glimpse of a direct call to sinners in prayer. If the "one thing we desire of the Lord" be their conversion, we will seek this event by personal entreaties, and every legitimate contrivance to bring them under the influence of the word. Prayer exerts a powerful influence over the world, as will appear both in its subjective effects, and, also, in its objective influence over sinners.

The subjective effects of prayer are the benefits which the Church, herself, receives from this exercise, including both the sustenance and improvement of the principles of piety, which are the disciplinary benefits of prayer, and, also, the copious blessings which Heaven showers down upon the Church in fulfilment of the promise that "if we follow on to know the Lord, his going forth is prepared as the morning and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." The former benefits depend upon the existence of principles essentially associated with a spiritual union with Christ. Indeed, prayer, itself, like praise and all the other methods of Church influence, depends for its efficacy

upon this union. Acceptable prayer can only be addressed to Deity through the intercession of Christ, and it implies even a greater intimacy than praise. Praise is approbatory; but prayer is petitionary. Praise relates to the divine character, and its glory, as seen in creation, may be contemplated at a distance and admired by persons whose hearts are utter strangers to the love of God; but prayer relates to ourselves, and it implies a most intimate and uncere- monious intercourse with Jehovah whose attention and compassion we most earnestly crave. Praise dwells upon excellencies which, while they excite our admiration, may also repress our presumption by their splendor; but prayer is a familiar approach to Deity; it confesses to him our errors; it unbosoms to him our hearts; it lays before him our wants; and it carries to him our frailties and seeks a relief for them in some special display of kindness. The Bride exhibits the elevating tendency of her union with her Beloved, by celebrating his excellencies; but the tender and familiar nature of this union she exhibits in acknowledging her obligations to him; in expressing her dependance upon his bounties, in thanking him for his many mercies, in confessing to him her many frailties, in entreating his forgiveness and his protection, in surrendering herself wholly to his will, and in exercising an unshaken confidence in his attributes and his promises. These principles of piety are strengthened by exercise; and what else is prayer, but the exercise of these principles? Prayer, then, indicates and improves a union with Christ, and insures to the Church nearer and stronger displays of

those divine influences which induce her strength and efficiency. But a live Church is a prosperous Church—is a Church in full accord with the sympathies and purposes of her Redeemer whose mission and passion and intercessions say, Come, to a perishing world. Again, the Church receives copious refreshments in direct answer to prayer. Prayer is the medium through which she holds intercourse with heaven, and it is, also, the channel through which heaven, in turn pours out upon her showers of grace which water and revive her daily enterprises. But when prayer ceases this channel closes. Then devotion becomes dry and insipid; benevolence shrivels in the soul; works of charity are blighted; the Sabbath school languishes; missionary enterprises die for the want of proper stimulus; in short, a blasting drouth prevails alarmingly through the Church. The Church that does not pray does not live.

The objective influences of prayer benefit sinners in two ways. The exercise of prayer, in itself considered, exerts a powerful influence over them, because in this exercise the soul concentrates its thoughts upon their condition, experiences an increased desire for their salvation, and resolves to spare no effort that would bring them to the Fountain of Life. Prayer, indeed, has a natural tendency to its own reward. The Church goes out along with her prayers in corresponding actions. If you pray fervently for the salvation of an individual, you will employ every legitimate means of bringing him under the influence of the word, and thus you become in the hands of God the very instrument by which

the answer to your own prayer is induced. But prayer is encouraged by the most positive promises of fulfilment. "Ask, and ye *shall* receive." "Seek, and ye shall find." But it may be asked, how can God, who is immutable, be moved, and how can man, who is responsible for his actions, be drawn by prayer? That there is a relation between prayer and the bestowment of blessings including the salvation of sinners, is a fact intimated by a religious instinct common to our race under every form of devotion, and is as clearly taught in Scripture as any other doctrine of our holy religion. We are chiefly concerned about this fact, itself, in exhibiting prayer as a method of Church influence. There need be no controversy about its mysteries and the reasons upon which it rests. Indeed, in entering upon such questions, we inquire for truths lying beyond human research, though we may show that the appointment of prayer is not inconsistent with the unchangeable character of God, nor with the Scriptural view of his method of grace in the soul. The first objection to prayer rests upon the assumption that the immutability of God corresponds with the immutability of nature; and argues that, since the former is equally affected by those influences which change the regular course of the latter in producing specific results, prayer is irreconcilable with the unchangeable purposes of Deity. This objection, however, can be urged with equal propriety against the very experience of nature. The earth has frequently experienced the most marked changes. She has passed through periods followed by the greatest alterations;

she has been convulsed to her very centre ; she has seen her laws suspended and her course arrested by many a miraculous interposition ; and she experiences continual changes, which are tending to a final scene of utter demolition. Is it safe, then, to rest the immutability of God upon a system so constantly shifting? The physical constitution under which we live is subordinated to a higher system of government which exhibits more correctly the unchangeable will of Jehovah. It may indeed be suspended in its movements, as it frequently was in a miraculous age, to subserve an event occurring in the course of some moral law, and the divine character will remain as unchanged as the higher principles with which it is most intimately associated. Matter may change, but truth can never. Now prayer is divinely appointed and establishes a relation, in this higher economy, as unvarying and as consistent with the immutable character of God as that which subsists between the causes and effects of our physical world. It is to no purpose to say that a mere human exercise is an inadequate cause of a result implying divine power. Prayer is as divine in its appointment as its corresponding event is in its accomplishment. The clay placed on the eyes of the blind man was not adequate to a cure effected by a miracle. It was, however, a means depending for its efficacy upon the appointment of Christ, and not upon any intrinsic virtue of its own. "The fact," says, Dr. Wayland, "that one event is the antecedent of another, involves not the supposition of any essential power in the antecedent, but merely the supposition that God has placed it in

that relation to something that is to follow." The other objection, that prayer claims to exert a subduing and transforming power over the unconverted in utter inconsistency with the freedom of their wills, assumes too much. Prayer no more arrests and regenerates them than the clay cured the man of his blindness. That such a power does operate in sinners, subduing their wills, regulating their affections and changing the current of their desires, is abundantly proven in Scripture. But it is not the inherent power of prayer. If the consistency of this power with the freedom of man's will be questioned, then this discussion must be shifted to another arena, where objections arising from free agency must be referred to the operations of the spirit, and not to the influences of prayer, where the Scriptural doctrine of regeneration must be challenged, and not the heart-felt devotions of an humble and confiding Christian. Having gained our point in driving the objector from prayer and dispelling the mists he has thrown around it, our present undertaking does not require us to follow him and answer questions in relation to the vital and all-absorbing doctrine of Christianity.

Having cleared away the objections alleged against prayer in general, we shall now illustrate more fully its consistency with the unalterable character of God in its special reference to the salvation of sinners. It is true, it were absurd to claim that a mere human power exerted in prayer could move Omnipotence. The volition and operations of Deity can never be subordinated to the volition and exercises of humanity. If such power be exerted in prayer it must be im-

parted by God, himself. In this case, would it be a contradiction of his unchangeable character for him to move by an effort of his own? But it is a monstrous assumption of the enemies of prayer that Christians profess to exert a power in devotion that will move Deity from an attitude of unflinching justice, and that will draw him to sinners in displays of forgiving mercy. Every intelligent Christian will tell you that the atonement alone can exert this power; and that it exerts this power by rendering to the justly incensed Ruler of the universe a satisfaction by which he can bestow mercy without deviating in the least from an attitude of justice. Then, the Atonement and the blessings which flow through it are reconcilable with our conceptions of the adorable "Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We have now gained one point, and we shall gain another by showing that prayer does not profess to open a different channel of grace to sinners; but that its consequent blessings must always flow through the Atonement of Christ. Prayer is a condition in consideration of which God accomplishes his purposes in relation to sinners according to his established method of grace. Then the blessings which *follow* prayer offer no contradiction to the immutability of God. But do such blessings really *follow* prayer as an antecedent? This question carries our attention back again to prayer itself, and leads us to inquire whether, after all, it has any efficacy in relation to sinners. According to the principle already elicited prayer establishes a relation in the moral government

of God, and is encouraged with most precious promises, only when it is exercised by persons living in obedience to the Divine will. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is his delight." The loyal subjects of this government are under the influences of the Holy Spirit who excites their desires, enables them to approach a throne of grace, fills their mouths with arguments and teaches them to order their cause before the Lord. St. Paul says, "I will pray with the Spirit." Again, he says, in his epistle to the Romans, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit, itself, maketh intercession for the Saints according to the will of God." According to another fact, already brought out in this discussion, the sinner is regenerated by the Spirit's influence. From these two facts we derive a principle of considerable importance in leading us through the mazes of this subject, *that while the Spirit is inditing a special prayer, he is, also, working out a corresponding answer.* The reverse of this principle is likewise true, that whatever motives may stir up our desires, the Spirit will not excite a prayer to which the sovereign will of God will admit no response. St. John says, "there is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it." Why are we released from the duty of making intercession for this sin? Because the Spirit will not remove from the soul a doom which the irrevocable wrath of God has placed upon it; and, therefore, in his essential concurrence with the Divine purpose, he will not influence us to pray for its removal. Then, if we

“pray with the Spirit” for sinners, our supplications will be at once efficacious, and agreeable to the established will of our Supreme Ruler. For instance: It being granted that acceptable prayer is influenced by the Spirit, and that the sinner is brought to Christ by the persuasions of the same Spirit, our prayers and the divine purposes in relation to him coincide; his salvation follows our earnest entreaties as a consequence; and in this whole transaction there is no infringement upon the immutability of the Divine nature. Saul of Tarsus was to be a chosen vessel unto the Lord, to bear his name before the Gentiles, and the Kings, and the Children of Israel. But his conversion depended upon a certain condition. Now, behold how the Lord worked in both the means and the end in fulfilling a grand purpose! He arrested Saul on his persecuting tour, and at the same time he appeared unto Ananias in a vision. He led the one into Damascus, and the other, “into the street which is called Straight.” The humble inquirer and the spiritual adviser having thus been brought to face each other, the result is, the soul of the one is converted, the mission of the other is blessed, and the will of the Lord is accomplished. Who will say that, in blessing the services of Ananias in the conversion of Saul, the Dispenser of all good deviated in the least from his fixed determinations. The divine influences which controlled the means and the end were only different channels leading into the same unalterable purpose of Jehovah. Therefore, in our regular devotions, we should seek earnestly the promptings of the Spirit; then our prayers will

be followed by blessings, not, perhaps, in a way we expect, but in a way that will promote our greatest good, and will reflect the greatest glory of the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And if, in the providence of God, we receive distinct convictions that it is our duty to offer special prayers for others, we should feel that God has called us to this duty; then our prayers will be in harmony with his will; then they will carry with them a guaranty of their fulfilment; then they will be attended with faith, and according to our faith so it will be unto us. How often do we visit the dying, when through respect and sympathy for the stricken family rather than by the suggestions of the Spirit, we pray for their recovery? But our prayers have no faith—no wings to carry them to the throne of God, because we ask for what is not agreeable to the divine will. But if we “pray with the Spirit” the result will be quite different. Four or five years ago I visited an estimable Christian lady who was thought to be near her end. Though outward appearances were very unpropitious, as she seemed near the tomb by the gradual but certain workings of a fatal disease, yet I felt an inward influence exciting the most intense desire for her recovery which I threw into fervent and believing prayers to the Father of all in her behalf. Though she does not enjoy vigorous health, she is still living to cheer her family and benefit the Church recently established in her neighborhood. Who will say that those desires were not awakened by the Spirit who has promised to teach us what to pray for, and who knows the will and the Omnipotence of God?

This principle, also, explains God's method of producing revivals. He sometimes pours out his Spirit upon the community more abundantly than at others. He convicts sinners more powerfully, and imparts to the Church a greater spirit of prayer. The Lord said to Ananias in a vision: "Arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one Saul of Tarsus; for behold he prayeth!" When sinners pray the Spirit prompts the Church to pray for them and go out after them in corresponding efforts. She may not expect a revival. She may be observing, as usual, her stated devotional exercises; but she sees sinners more regular in their attendance, more interested in the word, and more deeply concerned for their souls. On the other hand, she finds her devotions are becoming more spiritual; a greater unction attends her sermons; a greater earnestness, her prayers; and a greater fervency, her songs of praise. Her devotions take another turn, and she finds herself more and more drawn out after sinners. A revival in its incipency is going on in the hearts of the people and in the hearts of the Church, which will soon, and probably unexpectedly, burst out in a most powerful and lasting reformation in the community. The method of appointing stated revival meetings seems somewhat at variance with this principle; it looks like making the divine influence subject to a human appointment. The Church that looks forward to a revival meeting as regularly as she looks forward to the long winter evenings, should consider that the Spirit may operate in other seasons of the year. That genuine revivals may, and

sometimes do, occur in this season we frankly admit, but to make it a standing custom to hold such meetings at only a particular time looks too prescribing. The Church makes ample arrangements for this meeting; she sends for a distinguished revivalist, as though the Spirit would flow more copiously through him than through the stated pastor and the neighboring assistance he may call in; and after spending much time and exhausting much labor she often receives nothing to reward her forced efforts save perchance, a great inflation and a great explosion. We should perform faithfully our Christian duties; attend regularly our stated devotions; and seek at all times greater spiritual manifestations. The Lord, who alone can produce revivals, will bring them about in his own time when we shall receive a special spirit of prayer for a special work of grace in the community. But cannot God accomplish his purposes without prayer? Certainly he can. But he will be inquired of; and this is not altogether an arbitrary decision. Prayer keeps alive in us a sense of our obligations to him; it strengthens the principles of piety and brings us into a closer union with his nature that we may live more immediately under the invigorating influences of his attributes. O, how good is God! He will bless us in asking blessings for others and will grant us our requests in the bargain. Then, since prayer sustains and improves the life of the Church, thus promoting her influence; since it excites individual efforts for the salvation of sinners; and since it is attended with divine promises of fulfilment when it arises from a true spirit of devotion,

it appears as a most prominent means of grace by which the Bride says, Come.

(4) The Bride says, Come, through the living ministry of the word. This call is most direct. The ministry is the tongue of the Bride by which she relates the excellencies of him to whom she is espoused in a consummate and everlasting union; and in this employment it furnishes greater displays of eloquence than are to be found in any of the renowned masters of either ancient or modern times. The orator finds his genius cramped by crude and contracted conceptions of nature; and in panegyric eloquence by obvious and universal blemishes of humanity. In their despair of finding in the world subjects sufficiently praise-worthy to try their encomiastic powers, romance and poetry create their own characters untainted with earth, and clothed with the virtues of celestial beings. Even when an historical character passes from under the pencil of the panegyrist, we wonder, from what we know of humanity, whether he is not made the occasion of a splendid poetic invention; or, whether he is more indebted to romance than nature for his celebrated excellencies. But heaven gave to the world a character grander in every feature than any the imagination ever gave to fiction. The utmost stretch of the imagination, being but a finite effort, cannot conceive such a character as Jesus Christ, whose attributes are infinite. Hence, the Bride, in relating from God's own record his personal virtues, his divine perfections, his pure and boundless benevolence, and his brilliant achievement over death and the grave, flames out in an eloquence as

superior to that of other orators as her themes are to those in nature and in the conceptions of fancy. Indeed, she seems to speak with the tongue, not of men, but of angels, through a ministry possessing only natural parts and ordinary attainments. There never was so high a compliment bestowed upon any of the celebrated poets and orators of the world as that which the people of Lystra bestowed upon Paul when they called him *Mercurius*, the god of eloquence. Homer's battle of the gods is a magnificent specimen of descriptive eloquence; but the gods in commotion were only such as the imagination could create, and the author of their engagement, unable to rise higher than his own inventive genius, was not mistaken by even a dark and superstitious age for one of the divinities of Greece. The torrent eloquence of Demosthenes, while it carried along his hearers with an impetuosity truly sublime, was still thought the voice of man, and not the voice of God. But Paul, who possessed only human gifts and wanted several advantages of nature, while speaking of the true God and of his special goodness in the redemptive work of Christ, rose so high above himself, and the most lofty conceptions of fancy, that he was thought one of the gods who had come down to earth in the likeness of man. The ministry has, also, the advantage of motives superior to any which only regard our present state of duration. It speaks of the soul, which outweighs worlds; it urges repentance, faith and regeneration, which, as conditions of real and abiding comfort, outweigh all the elements of worldly aggrandizement; and, drawing arguments from heaven and

and from hell, it beseeches sinners to become reconciled to their God. The eloquence of the pulpit then has a twofold advantage over that of other orators. Its subject is more beautiful and sublime than any found in nature or in romance; and it is inflamed by motives drawn from whatever is dreadful or inviting in the revelations of eternity. This eloquence is really more allied to heaven than earth. The faculties employed partake, indeed, of the frailties of earth, but they are fired by the same subject and motives that would inflame even Gabriel, himself, were he to address us in relation to our greatest good. If the eulogist in bestowing praise upon a glittering specimen of humanity, and the statesman in discussing questions of mere secular importance, can enchain you for hours, why, O sinner, will you be unmoved by an eloquence as superior to these as heaven is higher than earth? Why will excellencies, too pure for earth, too real for fiction and too glorious for even angels to wear, fail to excite your admiration? Why will motives drawn from the immortality of the soul, the terrors of the law, the consolations of the gospel, the gloom of hell and the brightness of heaven, fail to elevate your thoughts, sting your conscience, arouse your affections, check your downward course and raise in your hearts heavenly aspirations? The fact that you are unmoved by an eloquence fired with such a subject and such arguments indicates a most critical condition of your soul. Will an eloquence less stirring arouse you? "If you hear not Moses and the prophets"—yea, the ambassadors of a more glorious dispensation, who are intrusted with truths

infinitely more beautiful and inspiring—"neither will you be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." These truths heard for the first time would move a heathen; and why they will not move you is explained on the principle that repetition destroys the enchantment of a lovely song. The dormancy of your hearts proves the frequency of your impressions, which will close your mouth and aggravate your guilt at the bar of God. The Bride never speaks more directly and more eloquently than when she says, Come, through the ministry of the word.

A word to the Church in relation to the ministry, and then we will close this topic. The ministry sustains a twofold relation, being at the same time the medium through which Christ communicates to the Church those instructions which promote her vitality, and through which the Church, in turn, sends out into the world the truths she receives from Christ. It is the heart of a grand system of vitality by which the Church receives and propels, through every tissue of the community, the principle of spiritual life. Hence, the Church, giving but a feeble and irregular support to the ministry of the Word, has the heart disease which is indicated by faint and intermittent pulsations; and when she gives no support, she ceases to live so far as her higher influences in the world are concerned.

(5) The Bride says, Come, through the press. This call is also direct, and is allied with the one preceding, though it is more diffusive, more thorough and durable in its impressions. The minister in the pulpit speaks, at most, to his thousands; but in the press

he may speak to his ten thousands. In the pulpit his influence is only local; but in the press it may be national and even international. As the pulsations of the heart send the life-blood through the arteries to the extremities of the body, so the rumbling of the steam press is propelling truth through written languages to the remotest bounds of the world. Andrew Marvell throws light upon the press and shows it to have been a more diffusive agent of the reformation and more alarming to a corrupt priesthood than the mere voice of Luther, when, in one of his replies to Bishop Parker, he ironically says, that "two or three brawny fellows in a corner, with mere ink and elbow grease, do more harm than *a hundred systematical divines*, with their sweaty preaching." The influence of Bunyan, the preacher, was confined within a narrow circle. Even this was too great for the bigotry of the established Church; and he was thrown into the Bedford jail. But the key that fastened the huge bolt against the preacher, brought forth the author, who smiles at its impotency and takes so wide a range in religious literature that almost hand in hand with the Bible

"His pilgrim marks the road,
And guides the progress of the soul to God."

We admit, what, indeed, the appointment of a living ministry implies, that spoken language, as a medium of culture, possesses indispensable advantages. There is something so commanding in the countenance of an impassioned orator, as to magnetize an audience, and then awaken its sympathy with the truth warm from his heart. "As iron sharpeneth

iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of a friend." The orator works on the passions in teaching ; but the press presents truth in such a form that it may be studied with the cooler and more deliberate faculties of the mind. The operations of the passions are impulsive, but superficial ; those of the intellect are slower, but more searching, thus giving to the instructions of the press the decided advantage of thoroughness. It is, indeed, too great a task for an audience of ordinary intelligence to take in and digest in forty minutes a discourse that engaged the intense application of a minister for a week. Only the more trivial portions of the discourse are retained, including the anecdotes and illustrations, which, apart from their connections, are mere wandering meteors ; while the thoughts which weld its parts together and strengthen the whole are liable to be lost in the hurry of delivery. The pulpit flashes truth into the mind in a more disjointed and fragmentary condition ; but the press shows it knit together and braced up with logical muscles and sinews into a compact system of close reasoning. From the pulpit we hear truth, and are so hurried through the discourse as to have no time to examine terms, review obscure points, and recall what was lost by the vagrancy of our thoughts, or the occasional indistinct enunciations of the speaker ; but from the press we see truth, we examine and re-examine it with such steadfastness of attention as to transfer it to the mind and assimilate it with the tissues of our intellectual being as the principle of pure and profound thought.

The press, also, exerts a more durable influence than the speaker. This thought will be more fully discussed in another place. We may, however, remark at present that the man whose influence depends on his physical demonstrations and on the capricious taste of his age, lives between the cradle and the coffin. His body and his influence wane and die simultaneously. Sensationalism, the rage of our times, will go out of style like a fashionable garment, purchased this season to be laughed at the next as a quaint specimen of antiquity. It may, indeed, give a man of strong magnetism a temporary fame and influence; but it will not impart to him an impulse that will send him beyond the tomb and give him a place and momentum among the luminaries shining in the firmament of letters. A false taste in its nature is transitory. It is a peculiar susceptibility of the times arising from some casual circumstance. It may be a fondness for a particular custom, or a relish for a particular vice made popular by corrupt men of State, or a particular rage for money bearing down the finer instincts of the soul, or an office-seeking mania spreading political corruption over the land, or a more than ordinary taste for trivial and dissolute literature, or even a religious enthusiasm carrying the people away in an impetuous wave of sensationalism from the smooth and deep current of piety. In whatever form the idiosyncrasy of the age may appear, it can sway the people only for a time; and he who conforms to it stamps upon his influence the sentence of mortality — “Dust, thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.”

If the works of genius depended on a taste so constantly shifting they would, in a few years, be thrown into oblivion. But there is a taste sunk into the soul and as uniform as any of our mental faculties, which will regain its ascendancy after having been borne down by what is false, and which shows the sameness of its exercise in the praises the people of all ages, in common, bestow upon the established literature of the world. The fact that the *Iliad* and the *Æneid* have delighted so many ages, have continued through so many fluctuating fancies, and, after having passed over such an immense track of time, afford at present as much intellectual pleasure as they did in the days of Homer and Virgil, proves the existence of a taste as uniform as the native feelings of man. The man who conforms to this taste has a passport to immortality, because he touches a chord that will vibrate through all generations. He lives forever, who lives in literature. Hence, the press, by preserving and distributing those thoughts which gratify the standard taste of the world, exerts an ever continuous influence.

Science and politics are wise in not overlooking these advantages of the press. By conveying their doctrines to the people through books and periodicals, thus securing for them the benefits of deliberate thought, they exert not only a wider but deeper influence. The political party that expended one hundred and fifty thousand dollars prior to the last presidential election in distributing documents in a single State, made a more thorough impression in this way than with all its evanescent campaign ditties and

elaborate stump speeches. Will not the press do as much for the Church? If her mission is to convert the world, should she not use the most diffusive methods of instruction? If her doctrines are eminently deep, searching and purifying, should they not be carried into some retired place, and there so studied that they may mold our habits of thought? The world expects of the Church as much, at least, as it does of science. Entrusted with most practical truths, she must not retire into a hermitage. If she would correct the errors of the world she must conform to the progressive spirit of the world. On the principle that friction evolves fire, she must utilize the improvements of the age, bring her doctrines into contact with the people, and engage in a hand-to-hand conflict with error, that she may throw out a warmth that will melt down the icebergs, and a light that will direct mariners "on life's tremulous ocean" to Christ, to virtue and to heaven. Some persons are always hiding behind the apostles; and if they were only as willing to do what the apostles did, as they are unwilling to do what the apostles did not, they would make some amends for their want of progressiveness. They will tell you that Paul never visited the churches with his satchel full of books and never presented the claims of a religious periodical. They forget to tell you that the epistles of Paul did more good than his orations, and that our knowledge of his doings would be but meager and traditionary without written language. Of course, the Gospel, itself, must not be improved; but there may be improved methods of diffusing it. To defend the right

has always been a national policy; but, while the principles of right are the same in all ages, the methods of defending them are greatly improved. How far could we succeed in a defensive warfare with the ancient lance and javelin and battering-ram against the grape and canister and booming artillery of modern times? If the world use the press in disseminating a poisonous literature, the Church must use the press in disseminating a life-giving literature. Her power must be developed by friction. She must keep up with the improvements of the age, and use for good the same methods that are used for evil; and he who lags behind always complaining about innovations in the shape of colleges and steam-presses exhibits more cowardice than sanctity, and might as well be a shrivelled mummy set up in a museum for all the good he can do in the world. The fire from his old flint-lock will be spent before it is half across the immense distance between him and his enemy equipped with modern implements of war. The church that depends on mere oral teaching labors at great disadvantage. Her local influence, which at most is not greater than it would have been before the days of Guttenberg or Schœffer, is borne down by the press in the hands of rival and antagonistic parties. Let this truth never be forgotten that the power of the church is increased a hundred fold by a judicious use of the press.

(6) The Bride says, Come, through our Home and Foreign Missionary enterprises. This call introduces no new persuasive element, but simply combines those already noticed into most direct organized

efforts for the salvation of the world. Any thing short of this will not satisfy the Bride. Her sense of gratitude rising in proportion as the benefits she receives are great, she desires to make the most valuable return within her power. Being the expressions of grateful feelings, these efforts are not forced, but are spontaneous ebullitions of the heart. What can be more natural than the following statement, inquiry and resolutions of the Bride? "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine! He has bestowed himself with all the wealth of his attributes upon me, and what shall I render unto him for all his benefits? This I will do—I will give him the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. To this end, I will offer myself on the altar of an everlasting consecration to him. I will say, Come, by creating Bible societies for the diffusion of the word of life; by fostering schools of learning, thus securing for my Beloved the benefits of mental culture in his laity and ministry; and by throwing my whole soul into missionary labors for the conversion of the heathen both at home and abroad." God is creating opportunities for our Home Mission work which the church is grasping with avidity. As he sent Saul into Damascus, so he is sending foreigners from every European nation, and the heathen from China, at the rate of 2,000 per month, into America. As he sent Ananias to meet Saul in the street which is called Straight, so he is sending the Church to meet these heathen in the Western States and Territories of our country. And the scales are falling from their eyes. They are forsaking their idols set up

along our Pacific coast, and are turning unto the living God whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain. Many of them are being trained to missionate in their own countries; and, already climatized, and familiar with their native customs and languages, they promise to be efficient laborers in fields that could not otherwise be evangelized without far greater expense and sacrifice of most valuable lives. Thus, God is transferring much of the Foreign Mission interest to our country to be absorbed in our Home Work. To show what a single denomination has been doing in this department, I beg leave to insert here a statement sent me by Dr. Thomas Swaim, District Secretary of THE AMERICAN BAPTIST HOME MISSION SOCIETY: "The first missionary efforts made by Baptists in this country were about the beginning of the present century—the object being to provide preaching for the Indian tribes and for the new settlements. In 1832 this Society was organized. 'The grand purpose was,' as the constituent members said, 'the preaching of the Gospel to every creature in our country.' The Divine blessing which attended this work through all its history approved the wisdom of this organization. During the forty-three years now past, growing with the growth of our country, it has aided over 7,000 missionaries, who have preached over 600,000 sermons—baptized over 70,000 persons—organized over 2,300 Churches, and about the same number of Sunday-schools—and helped to bring into the ministry more than 1,000 men, besides cultivating all departments of Christian benevolence. Of the Churches raised up, many are now among the most

flourishing and efficient in the West, occupying centres of influence, and paying back to the cause manifold more than was expended on them. What outlay has paid us in larger or quicker returns? It is a bright earnest of the work yet to be done." Having been thus successful in the past among our home population, God is now trusting the devotion and efficiency of this Society for a still greater work, by passing over to it the worst forms of idolatry to be demolished on the western shores of America. Thank God, the Bride, to-day, is saying, Come, more loudly than she ever did before. Her Come, first sounded in Judea, has been swelling, and swelling, and swelling, and now, like a sea of glory, it is spreading from pole to pole. In the divisions of the earth and the islands of the sea, persons, awakened by the Gospel sound, are coming, coming, coming, to the Saviour of the world.

In this way the Bride says, Come. In the influence of her character, in the enchantment of her sacred melody, in the earnestness of her prayers, in the eloquence of her ministry, in the instructions of her press, and in every missionary effort, she says, Come, to poor famishing humanity. From the mute language of her character, her invitations grow in loudness and directness, until we find her throwing her whole force in one combined earnest call that is filling the world with the story of the cross.

3. But, the Church triumphant, as well as the Church militant, says, Come. A voice from the tomb—or rather from a redeemed saint in heaven—often persuades, where living instrumentalities have been

hopelessly exhausted. Sinners who mock at every living call are often brought to reflection and to the feet of Jesus by the remembrance of instructions imparted in the tenderness of youth by a loving friend, or sister, or mother, long since in heaven. Death cannot ruthlessly thrust in the mouth of the Church a gag to hush her persuasive calls. She speaks on with even a greater accumulated force by her dead than by her living. Many Christians only commence to live when they die—they live in a higher life and for greater influence, and the tombstone, noting the consummation of Death's doings, serves as a stake set up to mark the commencement of a more vigorous career that shall terminate only when time shall be no more. A man, who, by divine grace, brings out and gives an impetus to eternal principles that are, in their nature, aggressive, will immortalize himself with them, and his influence will increase in proportion as these principles expand and revolutionize the thoughts and actions of men. The idea of locality is obliterated in some men; no age, no country can appropriate them; they are the special gifts of God to the human race. Their actions, embraced within the limits of an ordinary life-time, are only the incipient stages of a glorious career of usefulness, that cannot be known in all its magnitude until the termination of time. They may be persecuted, and may die poor, unwept and unmarked by their cotemporaries; but other people will see their worth, and other hearts yet unborn will feel the force of their ever flowing and ever widening influence. Bunyan, Baxter and many other sainted divines never spoke in life as they are

now speaking. Dr. Thomas Scott, the commentator, was in fact an unpopular preacher. In his aspirations for good he had nothing to encourage him save his own native energies and his unfaltering faith in divine assistance. Destitute of those personal qualities which excite enthusiasm, he was at times almost ostracised, and it does not seem that he was in much favor with the newspaper men who too frequently regulate their literary notices by the thermometer of popular applause. When the mercury is down to zero, and no person seems to know or care anything about an author, then, like Lord Chesterfield, they will scowl upon a struggling work that needs their smiles; but when the mercury is up to blood-heat and every person is indulging in enthusiastic praises, now that the work is successfully completed, then they will encumber it with their help when it can afford their frowns. The great work of the Doctor's life, not enjoying, at least in its earlier stages, those popular smiles which carry a work so smoothly along, was dragged heavily through the embarrassments of poverty and the innumerable blunders of a business incompetency to a successful completion. And when he had earned a reputation and had emerged from a life-long train of difficulties, then he was ready to drop into the tomb. His was little more than a life of drudgery for unborn generations—a life of preparation for a career that commenced in its greater glory when he ceased to live. His Expositions of the Scriptures, brought forth in much suffering, will ever be a power in the Christian world. “He being dead yet speaketh.”

The Church in heaven has an unlimited lease for usefulness. Her inviting voice, ever increasing in volume, will be borne on the bosom of time to the remotest ages of the world. There is "no speech, nor language" where her voice will not be ultimately heard. Her influence will "go through all the earth, and her words to the end of the world." Our blessed Jesus could better afford to lose the living church, than the ever accumulating influence of the dead. The influence of the living church is the glare of a shooting meteor, that of the church in heaven is an ever continuous light shining along the track of time to its most distant ages. The living voice will soon be hushed in death; and if it can throw no ray of light beyond the tomb, then the labors and sufferings of God's people would be borne in vain. Then many a Christian life would have shone to no purpose in the dungeon, or would have been extinguished forever at the stake. Then the Church, herself, would have been, long since, blown out by some furious blast of persecution. Then the prophet's zeal would have outrun his reason when he said: "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Why, prophet, do you not know that your heart will stop beating long before this desire is satisfied? Why then are you so presumptuous? Why do you resolve never to hold your peace, never to rest until the accomplishment of an event lying far beyond your earthly probation? But the prophet knew he should

ever speak through his prophecies until the establishment and triumph of the Gospel dispensation. In this sense he was determined not to hold his peace nor to rest "until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Death may hurl the living minister from the pulpit, malice may dip its arrow in poison and send it whizzing into his heart, but he still says, Come. You may cheer on Satan to renew his fruitless attacks upon the saints, but you might as well sit by the ocean and command the tide to cease swelling as to attempt to stay their influence. The martyr's breath may be stopped, but the martyr's influence is immortal, and it smiles at death's impotency. Then, the influence of the Church triumphant is greater than that of the Church militant, for it bursts over the boundary of the tomb and flows on in a continuous stream that is ever expanding in its course by the individual streamlets continually flowing into it from the generations successively passing away.

But the calls of the Church in heaven are more impressive. Religious instructions, like gold, are precious, but, unlike gold, they receive their weight from relative considerations. Gold carries with it its own standard weight irrespective of the particular mine from which it was taken; but religious instructions depend much for their weight upon our conceptions of the instructor's own religious standing. We are more influenced by a man standing high in religious virtue, than by one living in open violation of the principles he inculcates; though in the latter

case the teaching may be as intrinsically good, and clothed in finer rhetoric. We are also more influenced by an author of an established reputation than we are by a man unknown to the world. The moral essays of Addison will always be read with delight and profit, though sometimes they are clothed in a careless and even inaccurate style, while the same truths as beautifully and more correctly presented would attract but little attention as the productions of an unknown author. These principles will enable us to see why instructions received through the writings and illustrious lives of saints shining in glory are peculiarly impressive. Associated in the mind with the conceptions we form of their author's celestial privileges, they carry with them the impress of heaven, excite in the breast feelings of reverence, and strike the heart with the force of a direct message from the other world. Again, the instructions of saints in glory are more impressive, for they are more comprehensive. When the Church in heaven says, *Come*, she invites us to secure every blessing along the entire journey from earth to glory. The Church militant can say, *Come*, only in relation to blessings attainable in this world. She can say, *Come to Jesus*, because he is a present Saviour; she can say, *Come and secure a title to heaven*, because this title must be secured in life; but when she invites to joys above, she can only say, *Come, go with me to heaven*. But the *Come* of the Church triumphant sounds all along the narrow path leading to glory, embracing in its call every attainable blessing on the way. She says, "*Come and*

reflect ; Come, and repent ; Come, and trust a present Saviour ; Come, and be justified ; Come and be sanctified ; Come, and find grace for every trial ; Come, and find an arm to uphold you while wading through the Jordan of death." Thus wooing the sinner upward by successive steps, her *Come* at last brings him to his heavenly home. "Come home ! Come home !! Come home !!! Dear friend, dear brother, dear sister, dear mother, dear father, Come, home !"

It is true, the instructions of a saint in glory were given when he lived and wrote under the frailties of earth. But the mind readily glides over this circumstance. Seeing in these instructions the spirit of the author apart from his body in yonder tomb, the mind easily blends them with the conception it forms of a spirit washed in the blood of the Lamb and freed from every earthly imperfection. Associated with the frailties of a living author they often, indeed, want expression. But the stroke of death, like the touch of an artist which makes the canvas speak, throws into them a finer spirit corresponding with the now purified spirit which once uttered them on earth. They now awe and impress the heart as they never did before. O, how this is felt by those who have "parents passed into the skies !" When this glorified author in his writings elucidates some doctrine he seems to instruct from a heavenly fount of knowledge ; when he exhorts he seems to warm up under superior motives ; and when he speaks of heaven he seems to speak from heaven, and his calls are accompanied with a sacredness and indefinable

power that make them peculiarly impressive to the living. In this way the Christian commences to live for greater usefulness when he dies. Now a higher life is imparted to the influence he leaves behind. Now his works live, and breathe, and speak as they never did before. They live in a higher sphere, breathe the atmosphere of heaven, and speak like an angel dwelling among men. O, what an encouragement to labor in the vineyard of the Lord! Time is short and death is certain, it is true. But if you live right, pray right, give right, and preach right, you will continue, after death has done his worst, to say, Come, to your posterity and to unborn generations.

THE MESSENGERS WHOSE OFFICE IT IS TO SAY, COME.

THE HEARER'S CALL.

It is very difficult to get some persons to feel their individual responsibilities when the Bride says, Come. It is true, when the Church is flushed with the success of her undertaking, they pronounce *we* with as much relish as if their wisdom and sacrifices alone prevented a most fatal disaster. But when the Church is about to assume some burden, they use a personal pronoun that suddenly translates them to the north-pole, where, from the peak of an iceberg, they inquire with a nonchalance decidedly impudent whether *they* are going into such an enterprise. *We* are the Church in the flush of triumph; but *they* are the Church in the toils of warfare and the burdens of evangelism! They admit that the Church should be a light in the world, should maintain in her midst the means of grace, should carry on vigorously the missionary cause and support a religious literature through which the Church in heaven may continue to invite to the Cross unborn generations. But they say, "*I am not the Church.*" Ah! are you not then? Let us see!

"Let him that heareth say, Come." Now hide behind that if you can. It seems that the Spirit had such persons in view when he had this clause inserted in the text. He thus individualizes the responsibili-

ties of the Church, that no single member may shirk his duty under the plea that he is not the Church. The Church is the individual multiplied. She can have no other character, no other responsibilities, no other mission and no other glory than such as belong originally to her members. Individually the hearers are the Church in her elementary condition; organized together according to the apostolic pattern, they are the Church in all her brightness and aggressive power. Then, if "the Bride says, Come," "let him that heareth say, Come," follows as a logical necessity, because the former proposition includes the latter.

But the hearers may say: "We invite sinners to Christ representatively through the minister created by our suffrage. We pay him our money to say, Come, in our stead." Well, this is kind; and if you would give him a little more it would be still kinder. But when you gave your money to your minister to discharge your obligations did you also delegate to him your talents, your love, your zeal which, as Christians, you should feel for sinners? Are there not in your minds and hearts personal and inseparable qualities which cannot be surrendered to your pastor? If, after having appointed a minister and rendered to him money sufficient to make him a successful proclaimer of the Gospel, you still retain personal capacities which cannot be absorbed in the profession of your representative, you are entitled to functions appropriate to these capacities through which you may accomplish in another way and with as much satisfaction the same end sought by all the eloquence of the pulpit. There are different ways of

doing the same thing. One way is pursued by men invested with all the dignity of professional knowledge and recognition; but the fact that they make it the special study of their lives to do a certain thing does not restrain those native powers by which ordinary men may do the same thing in some other way. Our manhood must not be absorbed in professionhood. The imprisonment of John Bunyan and other dissenters for calling sinners to repentance without an Episcopal sanction constitutes a dark page in Church history. Even the Church that inflicted this gross insult upon religious liberty is now ashamed of it, and apologized for it a few years ago through Dean Stanley, one of her representative divines, who imputed it to the bigotry of two centuries ago. We accept the apology, and pray that man's native powers may never again be fettered, that religious liberty may never again be insulted by the jealousy of an ecclesiastical order which should hail, as an assistance, the good the most humble Christian can accomplish. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Let no unreasonable estimate of an office filled by men trained at the schools of the prophets and sanctioned by the imposition of hands, interpose to prevent the laity from coöperating with the ministry in urging sinners to embrace salvation. Let them have the full benefit of the principle, that *where there is a capacity there should be a function*—that is, there should be an opportunity for every person to do all the good he can, though he may not have in his veins Levitical blood nor in his brains dogmatic theology. Let love flow from the springs of their hearts for the good of

others. A pent up affection becomes stagnant—it shows itself in a sickly poetic sensibility—it broods and weeps and swoons over a picture of romance, but never puts forth a sturdy effort to save the perishing. The same is true of all our powers. A healthy mind depends upon the exercise of its faculties. Then, to say nothing of the higher injunctions of revelation, the very laws of our being proclaim, “Let him that heareth say, Come.” But we would rather insist upon a coöperative laity on the grounds of religious obligation than on those of mere natural privilege, or of moral and intellectual hygiene.

1. The laity are at least under obligation to assist the ministry in a work implying mutual interest. Professional work supposes non-professional agency. There is no profession, whatever may be our conceptions of its dignity, that can reject the assistance of an inferior as inconsiderable, or little, or mean. The physician, adorned with all the professional knowledge of the schools, and secured in the dignity and practice of his calling by a diploma, often tells you that the convalescence of his patient depends more on careful nursing than on his most skilful selections from *materia medica*. The judge on the bench, whose countenance wears the severity of legal acumen, needs the assistance of others to secure the ends of justice. He expounds law, and weighs testimony; but his sentence depends on the concurrent decision of those twelve sturdy farmers and mechanics who are influenced more by common sense than Blackstone in their finding. A priestly order

claiming higher prerogatives than any other in christendom is assisted in its ceremonies by those irreverent boys who tinkle the bells under the gown of the officiating confessor. Even in the works of providence and developments of grace the most humble Christian, yea the most insignificant creature, co-operates with Deity, whose purposes are accomplished through a chain of subordinate agencies. If then, God, himself, deigns to accept the services of his creatures, how extravagant are those notions which would so elevate the ministerial office as to disdain the assistance a devoted laity is ever willing to bestow? These notions were represented by the Church architecture of a past age, which placed the minister in a small pulpit built near the ceiling, as though he were a superhuman being who must not only be raised above the possibility of being polluted by the illiterate and vulgar populace, but also above the necessity of receiving their assistance while pouring down on them the Gospel which in every word implies co-operation. Common sense has finally prevailed; it has lowered our pulpits and brought them nearer the people, thus signifying the familiar and reciprocal relations that should exist between the laity and ministry. We certainly should not claim a higher dignity for the ministry than was claimed for the high priest of the Levitical dispensation. His office required the greatest personal purity, was distinguished by the most costly vestments, and admitted its incumbent into the *Sanctum Sanctorum*, where he beheld the visible glory of Deity in a symbol over the ark between the wings

of the cherubim. This office stood in the fearful breach between God and man, and was typical of our great High Priest who entered within the veil of the upper sanctuary. If ministerial dignity could ever afford to scorn the service of ordinary persons as too gross for acceptance, one would suppose that the office of the high priest, so scrupulously guarded against the least defilement, would have spurned the service of a common Israelite, as the Lord did the "strange fire" which Nadab and Abihu put in their censers; and that since it was so expressive of the purity and stern justice of Deity, and was so holy that he could communicate through it his merciful intentions toward a fallen race, he would have maintained it by a direct interposition, as he did the fire on the altar of incense. But the high priest, though standing in the immediate presence of God in the shekinah, and typifying his nearest approach to man in Jesus Christ, was assisted in his functions by subordinate officers of the priesthood; and since the Levitical order was denied an inheritance, he was made dependent on the tithe offerings of the common people for his support. The hearers may assist their ministers in bestowing on them personal benefits, in cultivating individual piety, and in doing in some other way much of the work engaging the energies of the pulpit. That they are under obligation to co-operate with the ministry in these several respects will appear from the following considerations:

The Church is under obligation to evangelize the world. This obligation rests on each individual

hearer as well as on the whole church. In her efforts, as well as in her triumphs, he is a factor. In every combination of Church work he retains his individual responsibilities, as the symbol X retains its value in every alteration and variation of an Algebraic problem. O, how can a Church member hope to be a factor in the Church triumphant, when he is content to be a mere cipher in the Church militant. It is true, there is much work involved in the evangelization of the world he may not be able to accomplish. He may not be able to expound the Scriptures and send them into the conscience of our home population; he may not be able to visit the heathen, to throw into their native languages the Word of Life and lead them to a renunciation of their idols; he may be unacquainted with biblical interpretation, criticisms and apologetics, and may not be able to confront the modern self-conceited infidel who clamors for intellectual liberty on a principle that would wreck all laws and systems in the universe. Still, this work involves his individual responsibilities. He must do his proportion of it either personally or representatively through a minister he elects to represent him at home, or through a missionary he sends across the ocean to represent him abroad. But in delegating to the minister a work he, himself, cannot do, the hearer can never relinquish his responsibilities for its faithful performance. The personal work of the minister; it is true, embraces obligations which belong to him alone, and which, from his superior talents and learning, are greater than those of other members; but his representative work in-

volves the obligations of the laity which cannot be eliminated, whatever may be the capacities necessary to meet the moral requirements of the age. This work is still the work of those who elect the minister ; its responsibilities can never be delegated out of their hands ; and it must fall back on them should it be neglected through official carelessness or incompetency. They cannot look upon ministerial failures with the indifference of irresponsible observers. Such failures, as the result of incompetency, instead of justifying the members in criticizing their pastor with a malignant satisfaction, should convict them of a blunder they, themselves, committed in the exercise of their elective franchise which they are duty bound to correct as soon as possible. Such failures, as the result of withholding from the minister a cordial support, are their own failures, and should convict them of a dereliction of duty for which they will be held to a strict account. Then, since the work of the Church is the work of her members, though much of it they may accomplish representatively, they are under the same obligation to give their pastor all the moral and material assistance in their power, as they are to qualify themselves for the discharge of duties belonging to them personally. They are under obligation to assist their pastor by their prayers. It is, indeed, a frigid thought, to urge this duty on the cold principle of equity. Christianity throws out a warmth which should so melt down the selfishness of the heart that supplications for the minister would flow out spontaneously before it would be necessary to force them out by applying arguments and the

stern principles of justice. Ordinary Christian sympathy for the minister in his labors, his dangers, his dependencies and responsibilities usually flows out in fervent prayers to the Head of the Church in his behalf. But should compassion fail to secure for him the intercessions of the Church; should it become necessary to seek from the cogitations of the mind what should flow, unsought, from the fountains of the heart, you will find this duty, as a question of justice, urged as strongly as any you owe a faithful servant or devoted benefactor. For, you elected your pastor; you voluntarily assumed this relation, and you are under the same obligation to make it a success as you are any of your personal engagements. You should pray as fervently for him as you do for any of your enterprises. He is, also, devoted to the eternal interests of your souls. For you he often denies himself of needful comforts; for you he often suffers reproach; for you he reads, and prays, and studies, and preaches; and, should his application for your good waste his energies beyond nature's recuperative power, *for you he dies*. O, who can deny his claims to your warmest petitions. Besides, he is in a measure doing your work. You must not let go the thought that Church obligations are your obligations, which you must discharge either personally or representatively. You call a minister to your pastorate, not simply to edify you, but to assist you by his talents and special training in the discharge of your responsibilities. Should you not in return assist him by your prayers? He also brings into your work native and acquired abilities which, if employed

with the same application in other callings, would secure him a competency. This he is willing to forego and to suffer every annoyance of poverty for your welfare. Has he not, then, claims upon you? To be true to your God and faithful to your obligations can you neglect to pray for him? His work is, also, most important. Other professions are mostly based on human frailty and depravity, and aim at so mitigating the evils of life that it may be possible to live in this world a few years. The minister's profession is based on the perfections of heaven, and proposes to relieve the soul by pointing it to Christ, the Giver of eternal life. O, shame on the man who pays his doctor and fees his lawyer, but never prays for his minister! But prayer is not complete nor efficient until it implies corresponding actions. He who prays for the comfort of his minister and, at the same time, refuses to be an agent in promoting his comfort, either expects God to support him miraculously as he did Elijah at the brook, Cherith, or is most insincere in his petitions to Deity. If from the abundance of the heart the mouth prayeth, from the abundance of the accumulated store the hand giveth. If a man gives nothing, he desires nothing in relation to the minister's wants, and, of course, does not pray, though he may be as wordy as the ancient Pharisees. Such is the confidence reposed in true prayer, that faithful ministers make their chief request of the Church when they say, "Brethren, pray for us." Then, if hearers hold up the hands and strengthen the heart of their minister in his difficult work, they increase his influence and coöperate with him in saying, Come, to a fallen race.

Hearers are under obligation to assist their pastor by cultivating personal piety. Success is the best pledge a man can give of his qualifications. The commendation of a physician is not read in his diploma, his professional card or standing advertisement, but in that multitude of restored invalids who say, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see." Paul very pertinently says to his Corinthian converts, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistles written in our hearts, known and read of all men?" The minister whose flock is ever becoming more godly under his preaching, will ever realize a proportionate growth of power. It is true, a valid ministry is not always a successful one. A minister is not answerable for his success, but for the faithful performance of his powers, and may be as dear to God when his preaching is "a savor of death unto death," as when it is "a savor of life unto life." The trial of principle is to labor without success. May it not be that such ministers lie even nearer the heart of Deity than others? They evince a steadfastness, and a spirit of self-consecration, which throws on the altar every thing dear to worldly ambition, that are not always found in those who are enlivened by the stimulus of success. The greatest ministerial heroism we can think of which generally remains uncelebrated is that of the man who, under the strongest inducement to forsake his calling, stands at his post as the mariner stands at the helm while the storm is raging,

the sails ripping, and the ship sinking, as resolved, if necessary, to sleep with his crew in death as he is to stand by them in life. But *vox populi, vox Dei* is not always true. An unsuccessful minister may lie very near the heart of God, but he lies at a very great distance from the heart of the people. If under his ministry his members are sinking more and more into ungodliness, the gleam of his genius can never check those popular misgivings which are always retorting, "Physician, heal thy flock." I wonder if those self-constituted custodians of ministerial character, who are always reminding him that his errors will impair his usefulness, ever think that their own errors will also impair his usefulness, in spite of his personal rectitude. But apart from its relation to ministerial success, the hearers are under obligation to cultivate piety for individual reasons. They are commanded to grow in grace and in the knowledge of God, not simply as a policy for increasing the power of the pulpit, but as a duty growing out of their individual relations to their Maker. The casual effect, however, of their spiritual growth will be an increase of the minister's influence, with whom they thus co-operate in saying, Come.

The hearers may also assist their pastor by doing in a simpler and more direct way much of the work which engages his energies. I wish here to remark that my apparent indifference to the claims of the pulpit must not be construed into a disposition to underrate its importance. Its influences are obvious and are receiving those applauses they so richly merit. There are, however, other influences not so

highly favored. They are generally unnoticed and uncelebrated, because they operate in secret, like the agencies of nature ; and as the pulpit can well spare our encomiums, we would rather bestow them where they are most needed, with a view also of stimulating the labors of the laity in this more retired department of Church work. The pulpit is not the only depository of spiritual truth in the community. The man who knows experimentally the preciousness of Christ in the forgiveness of his sins, has enough of truth in his heart to convert the world. He needs no superior talents to communicate this truth to others. A want of talent will obstruct the influence of the pulpit, but nothing will obstruct his influence, save a want of Christian experience. The pulpit often laments a want of sympathy with the people. Its discourses do not possess the magic power of raising men above themselves, of instantly changing a congregation of common people into a school of divinity for which they too frequently bear evidence of preparation ; and, as they are delivered to an ideal congregation of scholars, they cannot touch the sensibilities of the real congregation before them which is distinguished rather by a simple, common sense method of thinking. But the similarity of their education, the intimacy of their relations and the freedom from all pedantry of their conversations, bring the hearers of the word into close sympathy with the community. The truth they possess was not culled from the schools, but was created in their hearts by the Holy Spirit ; and it is, therefore, an easy and pleasant task to communicate it, bedewed

as it is with the tears of a joyful experience, into hearts already opened by congenial feelings. By applying the rules of criticism we may weigh sermons; but we could as easily weigh the secret agencies of nature, as the Christian influences quietly at work in the retired walks of life. Who can compute the good of the many charities unknown to the left hand, of the many words fitly spoken in private conversations, and of the many scenes, beheld only by God himself, in which the mother, with face bedewed with falling tears, is bending over her child while teaching it how to pray and how to live? Such scenes escape the applauses of the world, but they cannot escape the notice of our Heavenly Father who will reward openly every good deed performed in secret. Under these influences the religious tone of society is insensibly improved; but the real cause being unobserved, the credit is given to the labors of the more obvious teachers of religion, as the attention is given to the skill and management of the farmer while the hidden energies of nature are covering his fields with luxuriant harvests. A conversation accidentally overheard of three or four poor women, who sat at a door in the sun in one of the streets of Bedford, awakened the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress." The names of these women are unknown to fame; but the few words of a joyful experience, dropped in obscurity, incidentally kindled in the world a blaze of everlasting glory. How much more good has been accomplished in this simple, quiet way, eternity alone can reveal.

Some of our stronger minded ladies are complain-

ing of the restraints imposed on their intellectual energies. It may be that society is ungenerous in not allowing them functions suited to the more manly capacities they sometimes develop. It is, however, a question whether the new opportunities they desire would not unfit them for the greater opportunities which lie in their own sphere. We would be very sorry to see them released from the social restraints of which they complain, if the effect would be as ruinous to their characteristic graces in religion as it seems to be in politics, if we may judge from a specimen made prominent by the recent Louisiana embargo. We hope no social reform will ever be enacted that would dry up the fountain of those mild influences which have displayed the beauties of faith in every age of the Church. Were all our Church workers Pauls and Luthers, Christianity would appear in all her grandeur and invincibility. But we need these gentler influences to give variety and picturesqueness to the scene, to spread over it a profusion of tender graces that would soften the ruggedness of more valorous workers, as flowers and other beauties of the landscape soften the effect of craggy cliffs and stately oaks. The sacred historian gives us a specimen of the diversity of gifts in the Church, when he presents to us, in the same chapter, Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and Dorcas, the humble disciple of Joppa. The one illustrates the grand and heroic virtues of faith; the other illustrates its more delicate and beautiful workings in the affections. The stalwart genius of Paul dazzled in his eloquent oration before King Agrippa; the love-

liness of Dorcas appeared in the mercy which dropped from her heart, "as gentle rain from heaven," upon the indigent widows of Joppa. He proved doctrines; she embellished them. He built Churches; she clothed widows. She was, indeed, an unassuming illustration of the refining influences of the Gospel Paul so heroically defended before the rulers of the earth. Her sweet and retired spirit of benevolence permeates christendom, and has stimulated thousands of her sisters to organize themselves, for similar work, into what are known as Dorcas Societies. O, Christian ladies, do not be impatient in your sphere. It has been graced by the most beautiful characters, and through its hidden recesses an influence, filtered and purified, has ever been flowing to cheer the habitations of ignorance and sorrow. Of course you will not excite popular demonstrations. The world applauds nothing but what is grand and heroic. Your falling tears and secret prayers are like the dew and the atmosphere which, though most valuable, are least recognized; while the machinery, which gleans what they produce, monopolizes the encomiums of the farmer. But why need you care for the applauses of men when your influences are known to your Father in heaven? Thoroughly sift the most brilliant career, and you will find that the solid wheat bears but a small proportion to the chaff of popular applause. By your secret influences you may bring as much wheat without the chaff into the garner of the Lord. The nation boasts of her great men; the Church points with an honest pride to the best and most learned men in the world and says,

“These are among my most precious ornaments, brighter far than gold, and silver, and precious stones.” But what influence made them? The world points to our republican institutions, and the efficiency of our educational enterprises, but an angel in heaven points to an influence behind these, concealed within the retirement of the mother’s heart.

We have not spoken of the more prominent influences which laymen of genius and wealth are exerting in the illustrious enterprises of the Church. These are known to all; and we would rather speak of those not known to all. That these influences assist the pastor is evident from the fact that in proportion as souls are converted through them, his labors are lessened in the community. Besides, they create a healthy religious atmosphere in society which inspires the minister and enables him to preach with greater animation to a people who, from the same cause, are better disposed to hear. The obligation under which the laity are placed to render such service, rests on the general principle we have already explained—that the ministry represents them in a work for which they, themselves, are responsible. It rests, also, on another principle we shall hereafter explain.

The assistance the laity can render in the several respects pointed out, is most necessary to a successful ministry. We know of no greater object of pity than a minister unsupported by a coöperative laity. With all his talents he must be a failure: He must fail to add persons to a Church which has made no effort for their salvation, and which, by a palpable in-

difference to the success of her spiritual instructor, has lost the confidence of the community. He must fail by the force of his talents to build up a Church which, by its intense earthliness, has driven out the spirit of Christ. Besides, the coldness of his members and their indifference to his spiritual and temporal wants will so react on his spirits as to destroy his wonted power in the pulpit. The Siamese twins were apprehensive that when one would die, the other would live to experience the horror of being connected with a ghastly body of death. They consulted eminent surgeons who informed them that it was impossible to separate them, but assured them that both would die at the same time. We condole the misfortune of a living minister inseparably fastened to a dead Church which no longer circulates in him the warmth of Christian sympathy. In all the desperation of his situation, he cries out, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" We can, however, allay his apprehension of a continuance of this calamity by assuring him that it will not be long until he, also, will die. The life and power of the ministry depends on the injunction: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things."

2. Hearers of the Word are under obligation to do personally, all the good they can, independently of their obligation to the ministry. We now enter upon a new line of argumentation. What we said before had reference to a successful ministry; what we say now has reference to a successful laity resting

on obligations of its own, apart from the claims of the pulpit. In the former discussion we enjoyed the felicity of having met the views of all Christians. All admit that the hearer should say, Come, indirectly through the minister by praying for him, by promoting his comfort and affording him all the moral influences of a personal piety practiced in some humble sphere of life. But when he says, Come, directly, then jealousy, in all its green-eyed majesty, shows itself. He is now an impertinent intruder in a circle where he has no business! His duty is to assist the ministry; but should he perform its functions, he should be punished by the civil or ecclesiastical power, as Uzzah was stricken dead by the wrath of Jehovah for reaching out his hand to steady the ark which it was his duty only to carry! Why, admit this rival, and in proportion as his influences increase will the dignity of the pulpit be lowered! In all seriousness, is the pulpit, indeed, so inherently weak that it cannot hold its own by the side of a working laity? We of course must not confound with lay preaching the earnest personal entreaties of a Christian to his unconverted neighbors. We are most decidedly opposed to the former, as it tends to abolish an order of divine appointment. An active laity is so contiguous to an active ministry that in encouraging the one we may seem to give countenance to an invasion of the other. Nothing certainly can be more foreign to our thoughts. To the ministry belongs the greatest professional dignity. Its functions require special gifts and training; were established by Jesus Christ; and

are provided for by persons particularly called by the Holy Spirit, and scripturally set apart for their peculiar work by the solemn imposition of hands. We would not detract in the least from its dignity. It is doing a work which no other order of men can do, and in doing this work it represents the Church in her greatest evangelical efforts. The Lord has ordained its support by moral and material means, and also the esteem in which it should be held, in the following language: "Know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." But then the ministry should not hinder the free exercise of the gifts and Christian affections which the laity may possess. The hearers of the Word have qualifications which cannot be delegated to the ministry, for which they are personally responsible, and which, if employed in their own sphere, and according to the opportunities which may open to them, may accomplish a vast amount of good in the world.

As was said before, the original obligation to evangelize the world rests with Christians in general. St. Paul says: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to them who are of the household of faith." This injunction, while it includes Paul himself as the representative of the clergy, was addressed to the lay Christians of Galatia. This original obligation cannot be absorbed by any institution, human or divine. There is not a single native faculty nor a single Christian affection that can be restrained from doing good by any

special regulation of Christianity. From this generic fountain, the ministry, as a particular method of doing good, derives its obligation. Responsibility flows out from the laity to the clergy, and not from the clergy to the laity. The clergy is the servant of the laity, and not the laity of the clergy. It is true, an order of men to preach the Gospel was established by Christ. But this institution is not arbitrary; it is intended to supply those functions embraced in evangelical work requiring special gifts and training; and it primarily rests on the general obligation under which all Christians are placed to evangelize the world. It was shown under the last proposition that the obligations in relation to those functions belonging to the province of the pulpit are discharged by calling a minister and promoting his influence by prayer, spiritual growth and practical piety. But the hearers of the Word delegate to the ministry such functions only as they have neither gifts nor opportunities to perform. All others, which, indeed, constitute a large field for the practice of benevolence, they still retain and are under the same obligation to perform as though the ministry had never been instituted.

But how can the hearer select his individual duties from the sphere of usefulness retained by the laity? He certainly cannot do all the good it is his privilege to do, and must, then, be guided by some principle in making a selection. The *good* we are enjoined to do is a generic term, including the several kinds of benevolence which promote man's physical, intellectual and religious well-being. It is true, the

proposition that *he is under obligation to do all the good he can* seems sufficiently explicit to determine his duties. But his ability depends on something besides mere capacity. Capacity may be reduced to impotency by the intervention of circumstances. The good he can do does not mean the good he can do by employing his faculties in a particular pursuit, added to the good he can do by an equal devotion of his faculties to some other pursuit. This would be doubling and, perhaps, trebling his capacities, thus giving him the work of two or three persons taken together. The good he can do he becomes just as incapable of doing, when his powers are absorbed in another calling, as though he wanted the necessary capacities. A man may have the talents necessary to insure him success in the ministry, but Providence may direct him to some secular calling, where his talents may be employed to a better advantage. Now, in proportion as his time and energies are employed in his legitimate business will his opportunities be lessened for evangelical work. Hence, the proposition that hearers are under obligation to do all the good they can is sufficiently qualified by the Apostle's injunction: "*As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men.*" Then, man's gifts and opportunities indicate the duties God intends him to perform. The gifts are from the adorable Author of nature and grace; the opportunities are the unfoldings of Providence; and as both are ordered by the unerring wisdom of God, they are intended to be used in whatever sphere they are found. This principle is as divine as any institution of

Christianity, and cannot, therefore, be affected by the functions of the ministry. Then, if the hearer *can* say, Come—that is, if he have the gift and the opportunity to say, Come—let him say, Come; and in doing so he speaks under a divine commission as truly as the man who, under the most solemn sanction, unfolds the unsearchable riches of the Gospel.

The important question, then, is, does he, indeed, possess such qualifications? The hearer specified in the text is one who, by hearing the Word, is regenerated by its power, and who, though wanting the gifts of an orator and the polish of culture, possesses the higher eloquence of a joyful experience, which directly plays upon the heart and stirs up the affections. And O, many, many are the opportunities afforded him to speak a word in season to the unconverted while pursuing his regular calling. In his daily intercourses, with nothing save an experimental training, he may do even more good than the man who sports the learning of the schools. As many fish may be caught by ordinary means as by the most finished improvements of angling. A man may give his long, silken line so great a sweep as to send his hook into the tree, where it, instead of the fish, is fastened in the meshes; and to extricate it he finds it as difficult as the fish do to get hold of it. But a man more intent on catching fish than on displaying a glittering reel takes the commonest kind of rod, with the commonest kind of line and hook, and goes to the brook where the fish are to be caught. He lets his hook drop right down into the water; he gets a bite; he pulls out a fish. It will not do to say that

he ought not to fish because he does not display the most improved implements of angling. The man who can catch fish ought to fish, and the man who cannot catch fish ought not to fish. In like manner a man may make so great a sweep of learning as to send his Gospel hook into a high region, uninhabited by sinners, where it becomes so entangled with philosophy, science and metaphysics that with all his jerking he cannot loosen it from its perplexity. He fails at an inextricable point, too high for human fish, even though they jump up at the hook out of their own element. But the hearer may drop into the sinner's ear a few simple words, which will fasten themselves to his heart and secure it for the Redeemer's service. Now, it will not do to say that he ought not to fish for men because he has not the vestments of a regular teacher of religion. The man who can lead souls to Christ ought to lead souls to Christ. He is under an obligation to do so that cannot be lifted from him by any special enactment of the Gospel. I am not so great an admirer of Mr. Moody as to believe him a better preacher than Paul because he speaks to larger congregations; nor am I so deceived by the glamour of his doings as to call anything pure good but what remains after every particle of sensationalism has been sifted from the stir he is creating in the world. His lay preaching, aided greatly by the secular press, which notices sensational topics more readily than real merit, is, we fear, increasing a false taste, which distinguishes the present age and unfits the popular mind for the more solid influences of an intelligent pulpit. Still he is benefiting sinners

by his simple and direct talk, and may be offered in this work as an illustration of the good a man may do without education or even the natural gifts of an orator. We find, however, a better illustration of lay influences in the Young Men's Christian Associations scattered over the country. In these, young men, fired with Christian zeal and furnished by Providence with opportunities for doing good without infringing on their secular engagements, are wielding, as lay workers and not lay preachers, a most stupendous power in reclaiming the fallen and in beating back the aggressions of vice which threaten our young people, just leaving the parental roof to try their fortunes in a world of temptation. O, it is a thought most stimulating to lay workers that this grand force in Christendom originated in the year 1844 with a single young man of London. Impressed with the importance of making some effort to save the young men exposed to the vices of a large city, he invited three or four of his friends to meet in his room to pray for strength to save their careless companions. Small and unpretending as was this prayer-meeting, it was, by the blessing of God, the commencement of an influence indispensable to the moral welfare of our towns and commercial centres, where our young men are crowded together and exposed to the power of sin in all its seductive forms. The pertinency of this illustration consists in the fact that these workers are doing good without assuming the vestures of the clergy or loosening their obligations to secular business.

A faithful pulpit implies in its results a working

laity. How inconsistent, then, are those notions which would claim for the ministry the peculiar right to invite sinners to the cross, and would cast an eye of suspicion upon the earnest entreaties of persons whose zeal was kindled by the very sermons delivered to them every Sabbath day. They are taught by the pulpit to reclaim the fallen; and yet, when they employ their talents and Christian affections for the good of man and the glory of God, they must be told that their legitimate sphere is to teach their neighbors how fields are plowed, how houses are built, how fortunes are made. They must be told that they are incompetent to treat successfully a soul made up of so many fine and complicated tissues, and that their dabbling in evangelical work would lower the professional dignity of those who are specially trained for the skillful work of Gospel practitioners. But should not the pulpit make them competent? and is not its dignity raised rather than lowered by the intelligent efforts of laymen who drew their knowledge and inspiration from its discourses? Success always elevates a profession. The pulpit is not lowered by the elevation of its hearers, but by the incompetency and moral obliqueness of its incumbents. Without pointing out the import of most sermons delivered to Christians, we may ask, what does the minister teach, when he preaches from the text, "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves," if he does not teach that hearing and doing are as inseparably connected in religion as cause and effect are in nature, and that bare hearers, by arguing that faithfulness to one

part of their work discharges the obligation they are under to the other—thus holding that a head filled with knowledge will compensate the want of a heart filled with good affections and a life filled with good works—are imposing on themselves the most fatal deception? Then, ministers must confine their labors to sinners, and quit the discussion of topics relating to practical godliness, if they would have their hearers refrain from saying, Come, to perishing sinners.

But the minister may say, we teach our hearers the elements of godliness, that they may admire and not imitate divine goodness, and that their piety, untainted with thoughts of human degeneracy, may grow from pure sentiment of moral esteem. This would do if all hearers were in heaven and only ministers remained on earth, who, by a rare theological drill, could sustain the check which an occasional turning of their thoughts from the grandeur of God to the corruptions of the world would give to their devout aspirations. But hearers, as well as ministers, are, for a season, retained here; and they cannot cultivate piety by merely gazing on the magnificence of Deity, while there is lying before their eyes every species of human vice. In a measure, their acquaintance with divine goodness depends on their efforts to reform the shattered inebriate and to educate the neglected youth, growing as wild in society as brambles in the waste land. It is true, in heaven they may study more directly, and with finer conceptions, the character of Jehovah in all its glory, as they stand by the “river of life, pure as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb,” or

as they walk, in lily-white robes, the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. But here the process of culture will lead them into by-ways and hovels of wretchedness, and will bring them into contact with every species of human woe and every form of human depravity. The student may acquaint himself with the abstract beauties of mathematics in the recitation room as he draws diagrams and measures angles with fingers sparkling with gold rings; but he must transfer the process from the blackboard to spacious tracts of land, and must carry the chain over hills, through swamps and dense thickets, if he would learn these beauties as they are enhanced by the utility of the science. The culture of mere sentimental piety is confronted by two principles, which, though they may have no place in heaven, are essential to thorough training on earth; namely, we teach that we may learn, and we learn that we may teach. These principles harmonize and include each other. *Docendo discimus*, we learn by teaching. This is a favorite motto in every department of mental education, but it is more especially applicable to heart culture. The poet may give so fine a description of benevolence as to open fountains of useless tears; the minister may, by his soothing discourses on abstract goodness, lull us to sleep and cause us to dream that we are in the Promised Land, where

“Sickness and sorrow, pain and death
Are felt and feared no more;”

but if we would learn benevolence as a living principle, and as it diffuses through the soul a secret satis-

faction known only to those who have relieved the suffering and have received in return their warmest benedictions, we must teach benevolence by the daily practice of our lives.

But we also learn that we may teach. The end of knowledge here specified is the true one, as will appear from several considerations. First, our condition, as it is ordered by Infinite Wisdom, will be best adapted to the end for which we should secure the improvement of our faculties. If that secret satisfaction and refreshment, so highly eulogized by poets and students in their trial essays, which the soul derives from drinking of the fount of knowledge, were the principle end of culture, is there any imper tinency in the question why Infinite Goodness has not placed us in such a condition in which this end may be most readily secured? We can understand how the soul, elevated above the mists of mortality, can be sustained in a constant search for knowledge by the secret complacency which every acquisition affords. Its faculties, released from their earthly clogs, exert themselves with such ease and agility in the pure atmosphere of heaven that they never become wearied, and that the very pleasure of their exercise furnishes motives for their constant employment. But thrown, as we are, into a world of sinners, our faculties, so encumbered with objects of sense, are too unwieldy to be employed for a long time in deep researches without such weariness as will abate, if not extinguish, the natural pleasure which would otherwise attend the pursuit of knowledge. If, then, we should learn merely for the entertainment this

exercise affords, why does not God instantly transfer a man who has become a devout hearer into heaven, where he may prosecute his studies with pleasure and alacrity? Why is he retained on earth, and compelled to make inquiries under so many disadvantages, if it is not intended that his attainments should be employed for the good of others? But, secondly, the strongest motives that stimulate our faculties are included in the end for which knowledge should be secured. If this end is simply the pleasure the mind feels in the exercise of its powers, why is it that a man whom fortune has released from the cares which chill many noble aspirations does not grasp with avidity his rare opportunities to satiate his soul by drinking deeply of the Pierian spring? Why is it that great fortunes are not associated with large stores of knowledge? In point of fact, the opposite is true. The world furnishes but few instances of scholars who became eminent by aimless study. The native thirst of the soul, united with a companion so heavy and unwieldy, is not so great as some would make it, and it affords but a slender incentive to the mind in its pursuit of information. But it is quite otherwise when we study for the improvement of others. The end we now select furnishes motives that will overcome the indolence of our faculties, and will sustain them in a state of constant activity. O the thought that we are following the example of our blessed Saviour in doing good, and that for our influence there is less ignorance, less vice and less wretchedness in the world, will invigorate our faculties as nothing else will. Our most laborious stu-

dents and profound scholars are those who aim at the improvement of their species. Then we should learn that we may teach.

We should build churches for the same purpose as we build school houses. We send our children to school, not that they may spend a life time in studying arithmetic and English grammar simply for the pleasure these sciences afford, but that they may be sufficiently disciplined to engage in the active pursuits of life. In like manner the hearer should go to church, not to hear for the one thousandth time a discourse on practical godliness merely for the pleasure of hearing it; not to spend a lifetime there sitting behind his hymn-book, or solemnly gazing at the preacher, or reverently bowing his head in sweet slumbers; but to receive a message which he should make all possible haste to execute in the community. If this end were kept in view, smaller churches with less ornamentation would answer the purpose, and more money would be saved for missionary work. But many hearers are more anxious to *receive* good than to *do* good. Reprehensible as is this desire when it regards only self, they can claim at least one example in sacred history. Micah, after having worked up two hundred shekels of silver into a "graven image and a molten image," wanted only a priest to officiate in his house to complete his religious aspirations. Hence he employed, for his victuals, a suit of clothes and ten shekels of silver per year, a strolling Levite, who chanced that way in search of employment; and then, with a self-gratulation so briefly felt by many a modern church after

having called a new minister, he exclaimed, "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest." Ah, yes, "the Lord will do me good!" What, pray you, is the good a minister can do a church on a principle so intensely selfish? *The enthusiasm of a false life which glows while the novelty of the new minister lasts.* But this novelty will soon wear off, and then, waking up from a pleasing enchantment, the minister may suddenly find himself preaching to a church shrunk back into her own normal state of death, from which the most terrific thunder of his eloquence cannot awaken her. The only real good a minister can do a church is such as will show itself in the hearers of the Word, while, like their Master, they go about healing the sick, restoring eyes to the blind and unstopping the ears of the deaf. Failing in this, he fails in all; and to save his life and influence, so endangered by contact with the carcass of a dead church, he may be mercifully removed to a more propitious locality, where the expectations are more moderate and the benefits more healthy and enduring. For, be it known that the very expectations which call a minister, when selfish and unreasonably high, may be the cause of his removal. In examining the late statistics of one of the leading denominations of our State, I was struck at seeing so many churches without pastors and exhibiting unerring signs of decay. Why is this? Will the Lord remove the candlestick from a church which is stimulated in every good work by the instructions of her pastor? A church which flares up with a false enthusiasm under the eloquence of sermons,

but whose electrified hair, standing on end, falls, and whose every semblance of life disappears whenever the benediction is pronounced, is illustrated by the dead frog, which throws out its limbs in a variety of contortions when the galvanic battery is applied, but which, on the removal of this instrument, stretches them out in its own essential state of insensibility and death. But galvanic batteries were never made to keep dead frogs a-kicking; nor was the ministry ever instituted to thrill dead churches with an artificial excitement. Of what use are mere semblances of life which vary in briskness as sermons are more or less charged with electric power, but which, when the current is cut, suddenly vanish, leaving the church as utterly dead and as useless to the community as the corpse lying cold in the coffin? The producing of this effect is what the whole tribe of Micahs calls "doing *me* good." They are always telling you how happy they feel under good sermons, but are as indifferent to the duties they inculcate as though they were intended to stir up the man in the moon. Without needlessly wounding the feelings of any one, we would suggest that sermons are wasted on such people, and, in the exercise of divine economy, are often taken from them to be used in more hopeful communities, not as electrifiers of dead bodies, but as stimulators of such as are living and are ever seeking more light and more vigor in their noble efforts to do *others* good in their generation.

But it may be said that the opinions we are combatting are obsolete. They may be in theory, but

are not in spirit. We have space to notice but one evil, of considerable magnitude, which results from the notion that the ministry is the only medium of usefulness. This notion, of course, has been driven from the religious literature of the present time, but it still lingers in the mind as one of those secret propositions which, we are told, many cherish, but will not publicly avow. This proposition may not be advanced in so many words, but it nevertheless exists as an indwelling principle, shaping, and solidifying, and establishing a man's whole earthly career. Piety, misguided by this principle, is probably driving more incompetent men into the ministry than all the mercenary and other improper motives combined. A young man, immediately after his conversion, feels that he has a work to do, but by some secret impression he identifies this work with the functions of the ministry. This conviction of duty—which, indeed, all Christians should feel—he receives, as does also the church council before which he appears for examination, as an evidence of his call to the ministry—when, in fact, it is only an evidence of his conversion. I once heard a minister relate his Christian experience and call to the ministry. I would refer to him delicately, as I believe he is now in heaven, and would assure the reader that it is not our intention to impeach the sincerity and usefulness of his career, nor to invade the sanctity of the grave, and drag out before the public errors which were buried with him and should remain with him, merely to gratify a putrescent taste. Errors he certainly had, because he was human, but we may congratulate our-

selves if greater ones do not exist in our own hearts and lives. We would refer merely to an error of his judgment to illustrate our subject. He said that after his conversion he felt that he had a work to do. This was as it should be; but his error was in supposing that this work could only be done by assuming the character of a minister. His piety was sincere, but was slightly tinged with superstition, which fact accounts for the novel method he adopted to test the validity of his call. While riding to a camp-meeting, and just before he came to a road leading off to it, he suddenly dropped the reins, and concluded that if his horse would turn in of his own accord, he would be convinced that he should preach the Gospel. He probably thought that since an invisible angel with drawn sword confronted Balaam's ass in token of divine displeasure, another invisible angel with sheathed sword would gently lead on his ass by the reins in token of divine approval. Whether an angel had anything to do with an arrangement which he himself planned, and which was to decide, not whether he should go to camp, but whether he had a work to do, we know not; but we do know that the horse went to camp and the rider subsequently went to preaching. We, however, find no fault with him for preaching, but for seeking in such an unusual way an evidence as to whether *he had a work to do*. Suppose his horse had traveled on, and walked into some person's barn-yard or stopped in front of some person's store, thus indicating other callings, would he not still have had a work to do? That young men filled with the love of God should feel impressed

with the duty of doing something to save the perishing, is quite proper; but the notion that that something can only be done through the functions of the pulpit has wrecked the usefulness of many a sincere Christian.

3. The hearers, then, are under obligation to assist the clergy in a work implying mutual interest, and also to do personally all the good they can, without any special reference to ministerial success. The laity should assist the clergy, and the clergy should assist the laity, by informing their minds and stimulating their powers in every good work. Thus, if both departments of the Church be faithful to the obligations they are under to each other and to their common Master, we will have a coöperative laity. Having, then, established on moral grounds the doctrine that hearers should coöperate with ministers in saying, Come, we will in conclusion throw out a few hints as to how this coöperation may be secured.

(1.) We should insist upon a converted membership. A union with Christ is necessary, as has been shown, to stimulate the Church in her several methods of calling sinners; and, since the Church is the individual multiplied, the same principle is necessary to produce personal activity in the vineyard of our Lord. This union will suddenly transform, as it were, by magic, the entire moral complexion of the soul. Such is the mechanism of the heart, that it will cling to something; and, until it is induced to let go its hold by the superior charms of another object, it will cling to the world and pursue its follies with the

most unyielding tenacity, even under the most melancholy demonstrations of its vanities. It will not surrender an old affection unless another be offered in its place, as it instinctively recoils from a state of cheerless desolation. A union with Christ furnishes the necessary substitution. It realizes the alchemy which turns metal into gold, by suddenly effecting a transformation of man's whole moral nature. By expelling an old occupant it does not desolate the heart, but it substitutes for the world the one altogether lovely, who brings along with him into the soul a set of new thoughts, new desires and new motives. Now the affections grasp and entwine around the Saviour as tenaciously as they formerly did around the world, and freely enter into full sympathy with all that he proposes to do for perishing sinners. Old thoughts and desires now lose their ascendancy, and are succeeded by new ones of a more elevating character. Self, the reigning tyrant of the bosom, is now dethroned, and the love of God is restored to its proper place as the supreme and controlling power of the soul. In short, the hearer realizes in this blessed union that "old things are passed away," and that "all things are become new." He wakens up into a new life, and is impelled by new impulses in the pursuit of new gratifications. Now "the love of Christ constraineth him" to seek with invincible energy the salvation of souls. Impelled by the Spirit of Christ, nothing but a want of opportunity can restrain him from saying, Come.

(2.) We should place a responsibility upon every member of the Church. This will strengthen him,

as heavy pieces of timber placed on the shaky frame of a building will brace it. The consciousness of being useful will stimulate a soul glowing with holy desires, and will cheer it on to still greater accomplishments. The Sabbath-school, and the several benevolent enterprises belonging to a live and progressive Church, afford ample employment for every member. Laymen should also exercise their talents in the conference and prayer-meetings. These meetings belong to them as truly as private devotions, and should be conducted by them for their general improvement. It is true, the minister should, as often as he can, meet with his brethren in these social assemblies—not in his clerical stiffness, but on a common footing with others, and should mingle his prayers with theirs for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church and the community. But the responsibility of these meetings should rest on the members. The Methodist Episcopal Church, though having had at the commencement of our national history but a meagre existence, is now one of the largest, if not the largest, Protestant denomination in our country. How can we account for this remarkable growth in Christendom? I do not think that I misrepresent this respectable body of Christians by stating that a principal element of her success is her admirable method of employing the talents of her membership. The aggregate power thus developed is stupendous, which is still further increased by the opportunity thus afforded the pulpit to select workmen from the best material in the Church. As the members improve they are pro-

moted ; and whenever a young man exhibits talents suited to the ministry he is urged to employ them for the good of others, and at the same time is put on a course of theological study. Thus, by combining talent, practice and culture in her candidates for the sacred office, she is furnishing the world with a body of ministers second to none in earnestness and true eloquence. This method of supplying the pulpit is not so liable to miscarry as when churches depend almost entirely upon the schools for their ministers. A man, for instance, may have three sons ; he devotes the one to law, another to medicine and the third to divinity. But with all his sagacity he may make mistakes in selecting callings for his children, and may "give them stones instead of bread and serpents instead of fish." The reverend son may, indeed, pass successfully through the ordeal of scientific and theological training ; but, not having had an opportunity to show what nature has done for him, his success is altogether problematical. With all his culture he may still, for the want of natural gifts, fail, or may represent the pulpit only in its effeminacy. The Methodist Church can now claim as many efficient schools as any of the denominations distinguished for their educational zeal ; but we hope that, while she is affording her young men increased facilities for mental culture, she will not abandon the good old method of discovering and improving talent through a working laity ; for this method has been approved by the Divine blessing, and has contributed to the world a most living, stirring and eloquent body of ministers..

(3.) Every church should make organized efforts to evangelize the community. A committee should be appointed for this special purpose, and should be selected with reference to the localities to be canvassed. The Church should furnish this committee with religious tracts and other assistance necessary to increase its influence. Every member of this committee should secure the coöperation of every Christian living in his respective district, and should superintend arrangements to have every sinner living in the same visited and personally exhorted to seek an interest in the cleansing blood of Christ. Stated meetings should be appointed to hear reports of success, and to discuss topics relating to this important work. O how the hearing of these reports would fire the minister with a fresh zeal, which would show itself in more pointed and powerful appeals to the ungodly! Besides, learning in this way the moral condition of the community, he would know better how to season his sermons to the wants of the people, thus giving them an increased unction and power. Also, at these meetings, topics relating to evangelical work should be discussed. A ministerial friend informs me that at his young men's prayer-meeting he proposes questions such as the following, to be answered: "How would you answer a sinner who says he has time enough yet to become a Christian?" "How would you answer a sinner who says he is already as good as church members?" This certainly is an excellent plan to prepare these young men to say, Come, to their unconverted companions. Questions of this kind will evoke an interchange of

thought which will enable them in an intelligent way to meet all objections against an immediate and hearty acceptance of salvation.

(4.) Lastly, ministers should preach to their people such sermons as will excite benevolent feelings, and will arouse all the energies of the soul to work for the rescue and elevation of fallen sinners. I cannot restrain the indignation I feel for those divines who employ their talents in the vain attempt to dive into the mind of Deity and unravel the enigmas of his counsels, and who will expose themselves to deposition from their respective churches for advancing theories, not only heterodox, but of no practical bearing, when their services are so much needed to kindle in every hearer's heart a flame of compassion for the heedless multitude rushing, before their eyes, to destruction. They are interpreting divine plans, when they ought to be interpreting Christian duties; they are pointing out the part they think God is acting, or will act, in his administration, when they ought to be pointing out the fearful responsibilities resting on man and the fearful part his persistent rebellion will compel him to suffer under this administration. We are not responsible for the plans and doings of Jehovah; we are not responsible for the precise time and manner of the second advent of Christ, for the precise condition of the soul immediately after death, nor for the precise nature and extent of the punishment awaiting the finally impenitent. But we are responsible for the employment of our gifts and opportunities in elevating the social and religious condition of man. This every minister should teach his hearers.

May the Holy Spirit be abundantly poured out upon the laymen of the Church universal. We invoke this blessing especially upon the members of this church, which is yet in its infancy, which has new responsibilities arising from its new condition, and, therefore, needs special quickening influences of the Spirit. May the principles their pastor is so anxious to establish as the basis of their success be so studied and improved that, when the Lord comes to make up his jewels, they may have many stars added to their crowns of rejoicing.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THOSE WHOSE PRIVILEGE IT IS TO COME.

After having gazed with admiration on the Fountain of Life, we then, with an interest intensified by its inherent excellencies, contemplated the magnificent agencies at work in bringing it to the notice of a famishing world. Here we found that the Spirit, the Chief Messenger of grace, is ever arousing in the soul those dormant faculties necessary to perceive the beauties of the Gospel; that the Church, the Lamb's wife, impelled by the strongest affections, is ever proclaiming the glory of her Beloved and supplying the mind with those truths which the Spirit reveals to the heart; and that the hearer, having satiated his thirst at this Fountain, is ever recommending to those in quest of happiness the same sovereign relief that afforded his own soul such refreshment. We now return to sinners, whom we had almost forgotten while contemplating the genial influences, the heroic labors and the grand achievements of the Church, both in her organized capacity and in her individual efforts. The remaining space of this work shall be employed in explaining the qualifications necessary to a participation of this grace and the fearful import of its refusal. We will then notice briefly—

III. The qualifications for grace: "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the

water of life freely." By relieving the first clause of its metaphor, we are taught in plain language that a *desire* for Christ and a *willingness* to accept him are the true conditions of salvation.

The term *qualification*, when used to denote a fitness for grace, is looked upon with suspicion, as it seems to suggest some kind of merit as the basis of saving benefits, thus neutralizing the idea of grace in the idea of reward. A fitness for certain benefits may, however, be based on adaptation as well as on merit. In this sense we use the term qualification in relation to those saving benefits which the sovereign grace of God bestows on us. If we must understand it in the other sense, then, indeed, the best qualification we can have for grace is to feel in a most sincere and harrowing way that we have no qualifications whatever. Then the best thing we can do is to go to Jesus, exclaiming :

"Should my tears forever flow,
Should my zeal no languor know ;
This for sin could not atone—
Thou must save, and thou alone ;
In my hand no price I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling."

In order to relieve the conditions of salvation specified in the text of the slightest taint of suspicion that they contain meritorious qualities, it may here be stated that they themselves are imparted by grace, and that, therefore, the benefits which follow them are also of grace and not of merit. But we may be told that this view would obliterate in all finite

actions the idea of merit ; that our natural faculties are also of grace, because it is absurd to suppose that we could have done anything before our creation to merit these endowments ; and that, therefore, the knowledge we secure, the fortunes we accumulate, and the reputations we establish by their exercise, could not, on this principle, be claimed as the several rewards of our own personal worth. In a strict theological sense, this is true. God empowers us, by a mercy we could not deserve, to secure all our comforts. Still, the case here proposed is not analogous to the one under consideration. Our intellectual powers were not prostrated by the fall. They act freely under a constitution which remains unimpaired, and do not depend on a special appliance of divine power to arouse them and set them agoing in working out beneficial results. Though these results follow the exercise of faculties which God of his own free grace gave us in creation and constantly upholds by a kind providence, yet they follow these faculties in a natural way, and may be called blessings of nature. Had our moral powers never been prostrated by sin, they would act as freely as our intellectual ; a constant communion with our Maker would follow their exercise as naturally as anything achieved by our mental efforts ; and no distinction would exist between universal and special grace, as both the mind and the heart would act freely under their respective constitutions, unimpaired in their operations. Then the analogy would be complete. But in our lapsed state, those spiritual faculties necessary to perceive the terrific majesty of the law and the superlative

excellency of the Gospel must be aroused by a divine power, which the sovereign, special grace of God imparts to the soul. Then, our gracious desires and the bias of our wills to the Fountain of Life, as they depend on our spiritual perceptions, are gifts of God's distinguishing mercy. "The natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." There is also a meritorious connection between our natural faculties and the benefits they secure; that is, they are the procuring cause of these benefits. But there is no such connection between the means and the bestowment of grace. As was stated before in relation to prayer, the atonement of Christ alone is the procuring cause of salvation. It alone can offer God an equivalent for the exercise of his mercy, and can claim his approbation on the basis of merit. If it be stated that this view destroys grace and makes the bestowment of divine favor a simple act of equity, it may be said in reply that it was the boundless love of God which sent his son into the world to make an atonement for sin; and that, therefore, while his justice is maintained in all its integrity, his mercy planned, completed and superintends the system of redemption. Man, on the other hand, can merit nothing but the fearful penalty of the law he has broken.

Hence these conditions of grace can have no merit, as they were mercifully wrought in the soul, and as they possess in themselves no procuring power. Yet they are qualifications with which man may be saved, but without which he cannot be saved. How these

qualifications, having in themselves no merit, are still prerequisites to salvation, may be illustrated by the metaphor couched in the scriptural passage introduced at the beginning of this discussion. Benevolence has opened there a fountain made free for all. What qualifications do you suppose a man must have to partake of its refreshment? Common sense will answer, an appetite enabling him to drink with a relish and a suitable propension of his will. The one adapts him and the other carries him to this fountain. Suppose he had been created without this appetite—then the very means of maintaining his earthly existence would have brought it to a speedy termination. If we were compelled to supply the natural waste of our bodies by a nourishment for which we had no relish, and to call up in mind the regular demands of life by a kind of schedule used in place of those eager desires which are always prompt in reminding us of our daily wants, we would prefer death to an existence maintained on such conditions. A life void of all relish would soon end through sheer neglect. O what an evidence does God afford us of his benevolence toward his creatures in so adapting their bodies to the conditions of life that the exercise of those organs concerned in their sustenance are attended with most pleasurable sensations! A suitable disposition of this man's will is also an essential fitness for this fountain. If he *will not*, he *cannot* drink. Whatever may be its celebrated virtues, if he will not go to it he cannot partake of its refreshment. Hence an obstinate will is an insurmountable barrier between him and the relief

so mercifully offered. Now substitute for this fountain the rich provisions of grace ; for the natural appetite, the gracious desires awakened in the heart, and for the will leading to this fountain, the will leading to this grace. Then you will see the analogy ; then you will see how a *desire* for Christ and a *willingness* to accept him are essential qualifications for salvation.

But, to return to this fountain, the conditions on which its benefits are offered contain no merit. There is certainly no merit in mere desire. A man cannot, by simply desiring a farm, establish his claims to a farm. Desire indicates a susceptibility of enjoying that fountain, but not a right of possessing it, and must be gratified on a principle of pure benevolence. Nor is a resolve to go to that fountain meritorious. Good resolutions may have life in them, but no recompense for favors received. The benefaction you bestowed on that beggar was not transformed into a just due by the circumstance that, after much hesitancy, he resolved to go and beg your assistance. The prodigal son had been reduced to an utter state of destitution before he resolved to arise and go to his father. There was life in that resolution, but no compensation for the patrimony squandered, the home desolated and the parental heart prostrated by sorrow and shame. The shoes, the robe, the ring and the commotion over the fatted calf were only pleasurable demonstrations ; not that an injury had been repaired and former pleasures restored to a desolated home ; not that manly integrity and recognized worth had returned in the person of a lost son to heal the heart of a parent stricken with anguish,

to bestow on him honor and comfort in his declining days, and, like Joseph, to smooth his pillow and close his eyes in a tranquil death—but that a poor, filthy, ragged and diseased spendthrift, who was supposed to have died of excessive indulgence in vice, had returned to his compassionate father, who, with a joy so mingled with the love of pity as to be rather called sorrow in a cheerful mood that the work of destruction had not been completed, exclaimed, “Let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.” This parental joy did not arise from the dissipation of wrongs, but was like a mitigated beam of the sun which brightens the day—not by emerging from behind a passing cloud, but by penetrating through it as it obstinately hangs over the earth. In this resolve, this arising and this going to an injured father, there was certainly no merit, though there was in them life for an undeserving young man. O what merit can there be in the mere resolutions of sinners, who, after having discovered their utter ruin and helplessness by nature, seek in God’s appointed way the salvation of their souls! Their application at a throne of grace exhibits no other qualities than those belonging to a beggar, who appeals to the benevolence of the community for a subsistence. As God gave in creation the natural appetite which longs for the refreshment of that fountain and also the propension of the will which bends to it a personal application, so he awakens in the soul gracious desires and corresponding volitions by the energy of the Holy Spirit. Hence you see how a desire for Christ and a willingness to

accept him are necessary qualifications for salvation ; and how, at the same time, they cannot include anything incompatible with the idea of sovereign grace.

These conditions include all the elements of evangelical repentance and faith. Sinners thirst for regeneration only when the Spirit discovers to them the enormity and fatality of their transgressions. In their impenitency, "their souls are delightfully lost and bewildered in a pleasing delusion," if we may use Addison's expression in relation to other deceptions of nature. Their consciences are easy and their desires sensual, because everything in the moral world wears a false coloring. They are like a man who, in the delirium of disease, imagines himself amassing a fortune, or swaying an empire, or rolling in luxury, but who, when the fever is broken, finds that he is lying on a couch emaciated and so prostrated as to be unable to raise his head. St. Paul, in speaking of the law as the instrument which dissipates this delusion, says : "For I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." O could sinners but see themselves as they really are, in a state of separation from God ; could they but see the enormity of their guilt as it despises the goodness of their Maker and defies his authority ; could they but see that the streams of their actions are corrupted at the fountain, and that they are unable to free themselves from their sins, which are ever before their eyes, and ever threatening them with the just and fearful penalty of the law—then, indeed, would they be covered

with shame and confusion, would they confess their transgressions without offering a single palliating plea, and earnestly would they desire forgiveness and the establishment of holy principles in the heart, without which it would as certainly be under corrupting passions as the body, deprived of the principle of life, is under the laws of chemical decomposition. Well, the spirit infuses into the soul sufficient light to make these discoveries. He illuminates the law, brings out in strong colors the holiness and majesty of God, and gives a most loathesome view of man's native depravity. The sinner quails under these revelations, his false hopes and presumptuous daring now die, and he finds himself a disconsolate wretch, standing on a barren heath, thirsting for the water of life. David felt but little remorse and sorrow for several months after his enormous transgressions; but "when the commandment came" with a convincing power by the mouth of Nathan, "sin revived, and he died." His heart sunk under a sense of guilt in proportion as his sins rose in magnitude before the eyes of his conscience. His shame was most deep and lacerating, his confessions were most humble and ingenuous, and his supplications for forgiveness and a clean heart were most sincere and importunate. He poured his penitential feelings into a psalm, which he gave to the chief musician to be sung in the church for the benefit of poor penitents in every age. O who can read the fifty-first psalm without being moved by the self-abasement and earnest cries of this distinguished penitent, who threw himself wholly on the mercy of God, whom he

so grievously offended ! It proceeds in the following plaintive strain : " Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness ; according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight. * * Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. * * Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean ; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Such were the pleadings of his soul in anguish. Then it is evident that a sincere desire for salvation, viewed in connection with the principles which produce it, contains all the essential elements of evangelical repentance.

In like manner, a willingness to go to Christ practically includes all the elements of saving faith. We have no space to discuss the metaphysical questions that here may arise, and must be satisfied with but a few cursory observations. The power of willing belongs to all responsible beings. The very nature of this faculty supposes it to be influenced by motives, and not by the laws of necessity. Desire, as it arises from a sense of want, most powerfully prompts the will in choosing the requisite relief. But this desire

may exist in all its intensity, and the power of volition will continue to present an obstinate and unyielding front to the offers of grace, unless it be brought into submission by the operation of other principles. What other principles? Still using for illustration the metaphor of our text, a man may have a desire for the refreshments of that fountain, but he doubts the credibility of those who proclaim it; he doubts its celebrated virtues, or he doubts that he may there drink without money and price, and has misgivings as to his own competency to purchase a right. Whatever may be his desire in the case, these doubts will obstruct the exercise of the will in making a suitable choice. But remove them; then a belief in the credibility of the messengers, in the virtues of the fountain, and in its accessibility, united with an intense thirst, will so act on the will that a personal application to this source of pleasure will follow as a natural consequence. Hence, a willingness to go to Christ includes all the essential elements of saving faith. Then *repentance* and *faith* are the qualifications for grace.

O sinner, tidings of great joy have reached your ears. A fountain has been opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness. It is made available by messengers who are proclaiming its freeness and its efficacy. It is offered on conditions most clearly defined. Do you have these qualifications? Do you abhor your sins? Do you desire forgiveness, an approving conscience, a reconciled Father in heaven, an upholding arm on earth, a tranquil death and a meetness for joys beyond the tomb? Then you are

invited. "Let him that is athirst come." But I fear I am unfit to go to Christ! Unfit to go to Christ, when

"All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him!"

But I fear that I have persisted in my sins so long that there is no mercy for me! I fear that my sins are so enormous that there is no efficacy in the blood of Christ for them! I even fear sometimes that I am not included in God's purposes of Grace! Your doubts may all be summed up under the head of unbelief. You are guilty of the greatest imprudency in staying from Christ because you suspect that you are not included in the number of God's elect! There are other things besides the salvation of his elect which God has fore-ordained. He has fore-ordained that a large number of people shall this night die. Suppose you take ill. You may be included in this number; and if so, all the medical virtues in the universe cannot save you. Will you, then, refuse to send for a physician? God has fore-ordained that some people shall remain poor. You may be included in this number. Will you, then, make no effort to accumulate a fortune. It may be that God has fore-ordained that certain portions of the earth shall be visited with a famine the coming year. Will you, then, fold your arms and say, "God hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass." and there is no use in my trying to cover fields which may be laid waste by an unalterable decree? Do you reason thus in relation to your secular interests? O, no! Here you are most prudent in guarding against temporal

calamities, although your most faithful use of means may miscarry. You may send for a physician, and still die. You may work hard, and still live in poverty. You may cultivate your fields, and still reap no harvest. It is not so, however, when you faithfully use the means of salvation. The purposes of grace include the means of grace. The purposes do not take one direction and the means another. If you will go to Christ you may go to Christ. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The Arminian, as well as the Calvinist, will tell you that without the conditions of grace you cannot be saved. The Calvinist, as well as the Arminian, will tell you that with the conditions of grace you shall most certainly be saved. O do you not, then, act imprudently in bracing yourself up into an attitude of refusal, because, peradventure, you may not belong to God's elect? Should you not "make your calling and election sure" by diligently using the means of grace? If you do this, you shall not miss heaven; "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Do you still hesitate? What do you think of that man dying in yonder desert, who hesitates as messengers, one after another, are going to him, saying: "just a few rods ahead is a most beautiful spring—come, drink and live?" That man represents you in your hesitancy. O you are perishing! But there is a fountain. It is there—not to distress you, as the sight of an unattainable good distresses those who are hopelessly longing for it, but it is there to save

you. The Spirit goes to you and says, Come. The Church, including saints on earth and saints in heaven, goes to you and says, Come. The hearer, having refreshed his own soul at this fountain, and being able to recommend its saving power, goes to you and says, Come. O be careful lest your hesitancy terminate in absolute refusal.

O do you refuse? O think that in this decision there is a choice as well as a refusal. You choose death and refuse life; you choose endless misery and refuse endless happiness. Do you not know that in refusing God's richest blessings you incur the additional crime of despising the mercy of heaven so freely poured out upon a sinful world? The nature of this additional crime you will learn in the following discussion of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Give, then, your undivided attention to the awful import of a determined and persistent refusal of grace.

THE REFUSAL: OR, THE NATURE OF THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

“Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men. but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—Matt. xii. 31, 32.

That there are mysteries in the Bible is evident from the fact that it is a revelation from God. Had God revealed to man all the facts and all the reasons of the facts in relation to his own essence, works and providence, he would have made man omniscient, which he could not have done without destroying his own sovereignty. It is evident, then, that many truths in relation to God lie beyond the limits of revelation, and must remain in mystery. This fact, however, will not apply to those truths relating to the duty of man. The very nature of such truths implies the necessity of their being understood.

WHAT IS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN?—A PRACTICAL QUESTION.

Of this nature is the truth of our text. It evidently involves the questions of human obligation and human happiness, and is, therefore, a legitimate topic of inquiry. If my happiness and doom may become involved in this terrible denunciation of our Sa-

viour should I not know the precise nature of the sin so strongly denounced? Why should we keep hands off, and allow this passage of Scripture to be fenced around in a small corner of the territory of revealed truth as a mere question of speculation, to fill the hearts of many timid and pious persons with an indefinable and groundless terror? Should we not rather bring it out, tear from it its mysterious garb, throw upon it the light of the Gospel and put it to a practical use? Many truly pious and humble persons have been greatly annoyed, have been deprived of the comforts of religion and brought even to the brink of despair by this passage of Scripture. Should they not have their apprehensions allayed by knowing the precise nature of the unpardonable sin? Again, there are many rapidly traveling to that point beyond which there is no forgiveness, who, if they but knew the nature of this sin, might take warning in time and be saved. It is, therefore, a question of practical importance, and as such, there is a reason why it should not remain in mystery. We have in view your spiritual improvement in discussing *the nature of the unpardonable sin.*

IT IS NOT A RARE ACT OF TRANSGRESSION.

The sin against the Holy Ghost is not some rare and monstrous act of iniquity, peculiar to the persecuting Jews who witnessed the miraculous power of our Saviour; nor in our own day is it only to be met with in a few solitary instances of enormous and inexpiable transgression. In the first clause of our text our blessed Saviour says, "All manner of sin

and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," etc. Observe the unconditional positiveness of the clause, "All manner of sin and blasphemy *shall be forgiven unto men.*" Now, if the "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost" is some rare and monstrous transgression, the logical conclusion is that few shall finally be lost. But this conclusion does not harmonize with the other teachings of the New Testament. Our Saviour teaches us that those who are going to heaven are but few, when compared with those who are going to hell. "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." We are taught that all sins are unpardonable without a coming to Christ, and that every sin is pardonable, however vile in character, if the person who incurred it make a personal application to Christ by repentance and faith. We must, therefore, tear from this sin that peculiar aspect with which it is invested and clothe it with a more general character. We must also cease to regard those Pharisees whose conduct called forth this denunciation of our Saviour as maintaining an attitude of mind different from that maintained by very, very many in our own day.

IT IS NOT THE MERE ACT OF SPEAKING AGAINST
THE SPIRIT.

This sin does not consist in the outward act of "speaking against the Holy Ghost." Here again

our interpretation of this passage must harmonize with other facts in the New Testament. The Holy Ghost was associated with the "Son of Man" in his wonderful miraculous achievements. The blasphemy uttered against Christ was equally uttered against the Spirit. Who, then, of the persecuting Jews of that day could have been saved? Not one. Yet many of them were saved. Christ interceded for the vilest of his persecutors, many of whom repented and were converted. Paul was a blasphemer; and though his persecutions of the early Christians were carried on soon after the day of Pentecost and under the immediate dispensation of the Spirit, yet he obtained mercy, and reversed the force of his influence in defense of the same cause against which he shortly before breathed out "threatenings and slaughter." We must, therefore, abandon the idea as inconsistent with the recorded facts of the New Testament, that the unpardonable sin consists in the mere act of speaking against the Holy Ghost. Wicked and dangerous as this is, the bridge may not yet be burned down upon which the sinner may travel to Christ and to heaven.

It is true that blasphemy is calumny or detraction, reproachful or abusive language uttered against Jehovah. It is also true that it is upon the outward act of speaking on the part of the Pharisees that our Saviour uttered this remarkable denunciation. But he tells us, in a subsequent verse, that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. It was, therefore, the attitude of their hearts in relation to the Holy Ghost that called forth this denunciation,

IT IS AN OBSTINATE RESISTANCE OF THE HEART TO
THE INFLUENCES OF THE SPIRIT.

What, then, is this sin? We have already extricated it from those limits which would confine it to the hostility of those Jews to whom the language of our text was directed. We have already shown that it is no rare phenomenon of depravity; we have already brought it down as a sin of general prevalence in our own day. It is, therefore, a live question, a practical question, a question in which you and I are deeply interested—what is that sin for which there is no forgiveness, “neither in this world, neither in the world to come?” Throwing upon it all the light of reason and Scripture we can command—harmonizing it with the teachings of Christ and his Apostles, and bringing it within the operations of the general and well-defined law that will exclude the finally impenitent from the “inheritance of the saints of light”—we must conclude that this sin is nothing more nor less than an obstinate attitude of the soul in relation to the Holy Spirit, carried to such a degree of persistency that the conscience no longer plies the sinner with its admonitions, and that he is given over to judicial and irrevocable hardness of heart. Receive this as the proper definition of the unpardonable sin, and you will have a principle that will lead you through the mazes of this and similar dark and hidden passages; that will infuse the comforting influences of the Gospel into your hearts, which were sometimes under a cloud of anxiety, and that will teach you the impor-

tance of cherishing the tender admonitions of an enlightened conscience. This, then, brings us to discuss

IV. The Refusal of Grace. Having developed, from the circumstances in the case, the doctrine our Saviour has taught in the text, we shall now elucidate it by arguments drawn from the *fact* that the Holy spirit is specialized as the object of the unpardonable sin; from the analogy that would explain the reasonableness of such specialty, and from the peculiar relation we sustain to the Third person in the Holy Trinity.

1. Our first argument, then, will be drawn from the *fact* that, as the object of the unpardonable sin,

SPECIAL MENTION IS MADE OF THE SPIRIT.

Why is it that an attitude of hostility in relation to the Holy Spirit may be unpardonable when it is not in relation to the Father or the Son? Is he not the Third Person in the Trinity? Are not all the divine attributes ascribed to him? Is he not an object of supreme worship? Is he not associated with the Father and the Son in creative acts, in the preservation of all things, in the inspiration of the prophets, in the formula of baptism, and in the apostolic benediction? Are not his personality and deity proven with the same clearness as any other doctrine of our holy religion? Why, then, is not a sin committed against him equally committed against the other persons in the Godhead? Can we make the Holy Ghost an exclusive object of an unpardonable hos-

tility without severing his connection with the divine essence, and thus destroying the glorious doctrine of the trinity and substituting polytheism in its stead? Is not the Son equal, though not superior to the Spirit in holiness? Why, then, is a sin committed against the one less enormous than a sin of the same character committed against the other? Or, in other words, why is it that "whosoever speaketh against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come?"

Admitting, for the present, that these questions are inexplicable, there need be no doubt in reference to the *fact* itself and its necessary logical conclusion. Many facts fall within the limits of revelation as essential articles of faith, while the reasons upon which they are based are excluded as unnecessary information. We have a notable illustration of this principle in the doctrine of the Trinity itself. Though we cannot explain *how* three persons are united in one Godhead, the doctrine itself has never been contradicted by any demonstration of truth or testimony of our senses. It is one of those incomprehensible doctrines which lie above, but do not contradict human reason; and we receive it as an article of our faith, not because we can explain it, but because we can prove it by the emphatic declarations of Scripture. Then, even supposing we cannot comprehend how the third person in the divine unity can be specialized as an object of hostility, and how hostility, only in this relation, can be carried to such a

degree of enormity as to be brought under the fiat of an irrevocable wrath, we cannot, at least, contradict this so long as we cannot contradict the doctrine of the trinity, and must, therefore, admit it upon the declaration of him who has so distinctly pointed to the Holy Spirit as the object of the unpardonable sin.

But what does this fact, in all its absoluteness, prove? Though at present we may not be able to assign for it a reason, we must nevertheless admit its sequence; namely, that the unpardonable sin is no *act* of transgression. Ransack the whole code of moral laws, and you will not find a single command which was not enacted by the Sovereign of the universe for the regulation of his government. When either of these laws are broken, he, without any special reference to the third person in the Trinity, becomes the object of hostility. But the unpardonable sin is an offense against the Holy Spirit. As no actual transgression can have this specific relation, this sin must, therefore, be a rebellious *state* or *condition* of the soul in relation to the Spirit's influence. How this hostile condition of the heart may become an unpardonable offense is not necessary for us to know in our present stage of investigation. Though we may shortly give a reason for this, at present it is enough to know that such is the fact.

ARGUMENT DRAWN FROM ANALOGY.

2. But there is another view we may take of this subject, in which this delicate question may be explained by analogy. There is a reason why the Spirit may be pointed out as a special object of hos-

tility, and this reason involves the nature of this sin, and carries with it a reason why it may become unpardonable. There is a very nice distinction between a sin committed against the *essence* and a sin committed against the *office work* of the Holy Ghost. The civil law recognizes a similar distinction in our social relations. An insult or an act of violence is punished with a heavier penalty when committed against the official character of an individual than when it is committed against his personal character. But we will introduce another analogy more to the point. Suppose two persons in a state of alienation to each other, and that the one pursues the other with a deep-rooted and determined malignity that nothing short of a complete reconciliation can destroy. Whether we could apologize for this conduct or not without knowing the nature of the difficulty, we could at least regard it as a natural outgrowth of the relations existing between them. But suppose the one party should visit the other with offices of kindness; should proffer him terms of reconciliation easy and reasonable, and should convince him of the sinfulness of his conduct and the advantages of an amicable settlement of the difficulty. Now, should this kindness, these proffered terms of peace, and these clear and convincing arguments be rejected by the other party, his former hatred would at once be turned into wilful obstinacy; he would incur the additional crime of ingratitude; he would lose the sympathy of a peaceful community; and having so deliberately insulted these terms of amity, he would probably be permitted to enjoy all the gratification of his wilful and unreasonable stubborn-

ness. His character cannot remain uninfluenced by this proposition of peace. He must be made either better or worse by it. It was intended to make him better, but he chooses the other alternative of being made worse. You perceive clearly that he is made worse—not by any additional actual offense committed against his adversary, but by a *mere resistance to the conciliatory influences* flowing from a generous and forgiving heart. You perceive, further, how his resistance may justify the other in leaving him severely alone, and may thus extinguish the glimmering hope of reconciliation.

Now apply this principle to the hostility of man in relation to God, and tell me whether the sinner's opposition to the Holy Ghost in his office of an Enlightener, or Advisor, or Persuasive Monitor, is not more aggravating, than when it arose merely from the moral blindness of a nature sunk in all the stupidity of a constitutional alienation from God. Tell me whether you cannot perceive a distinction between the essence and the office work of the Spirit; whether sin against the one is not less heinous than sin against the other; whether in the one case it is not constitutional, and in the other, wilful, inexcusable and obstinate; whether this sin is not a settled opposition to the Spirit's gracious influences, and whether, by fastening on the soul its deplorable consequences, this opposition may not culminate in the sinner's utter abandonment.

ARGUMENT DRAWN FROM THE SINNER'S RELATION TO
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

3. But developing this idea more fully, we may see further that the unpardonable sin can be committed

against the Holy Spirit only in his official relation to the system of grace, as the vital and moving power which leads the sinner to repentance and into the fold of God. This is argued from the sinner's peculiar relation to the Holy Spirit. It does not require great sagacity of mind to perceive that he stands in a different relation to the Spirit than he does to the Father and the Son. He is at a great distance from either of the latter, but he is very near the former, even so near as to feel his movements within, plying him with reproofs and admonitions, unless driven off by wilful and persistent hostility. In conversion the sinner goes to the Father through the Son, but he does not go to the Spirit. The Spirit comes to him and enables him to take the two important steps to the kingdom of God—repentance and faith. Alienation from the Father and the Son is no insurmountable difficulty to the returning sinner, because it was measured in its full extent, was taken into account and provided for in that system of redemption that sprung from the benevolence of God. This alienation is at once the occasion and the measurement of the plan of reconciliation, just as the depth of a well is the occasion and measurement of the cable employed to draw up its water. But an alienation of the spirit from the soul is an insurmountable difficulty to the sinner, because there is no provision for it in the benevolent arrangement for man's redemption. Now this thought fully conceived will open to your minds the deep underlying meaning of our Saviour when he says, "Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever

speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."

Now, admitting that the true interpretation of the phrase, "speaketh a word against," is an attitude of hostility to the Son, or the Spirit, we can clearly see why the unpardonable sin cannot be committed against the Father, or First Person in the Trinity. The cable of divine love, held in the hand of Omnipotence and extending down to our sinful world, is not just long enough to reach the most respectable sinners, but it will reach the less, and the less, and the still less respectable, even though they be found at the very bottom of human depravity. You cannot separate yourself so far from the Father but that you may, if you will, take hold of the cable and be saved. When you cry out for mercy, God does not answer down to you, "you are too great a sinner; my cable will not reach you." But he says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." With him your reinstatement into his family is a question of personal faith, not of personal virtue. To say that a person is too wicked to be accepted of the Father, would be to say that the cable of divine love is too short to reach him—a miscalculation Divine Wisdom could never have made.

You see also why the unpardonable sin could not be committed against the Son, or Second Person in the Trinity. The merits of his blood are co-extensive with the most malignant case of depravity. If you come to him by repentance and faith, he will apply to you the virtues of his atonement. "Though

your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Then, this sin can be committed only against the Spirit, or Third Person in the Trinity.

You can further see why the unpardonable sin cannot be committed in a state of grace. If a man, after having been washed in the blood of the Son, and brought under the care and protection of the Father, who received him so affectionately, with open arms, to his bosom, could so yield to a rebellious disposition as to sever forever his connection with the system of grace, then the Father and the Son, rather than the Spirit, would be the object of his unpardonable hostility; and this would be, not only contrary to the declaration of our text, but also impossible, as we have already illustrated, because it would argue a defect in the provisions made for our salvation. When you receive Christ, you do not receive him as a half-Saviour, nor as an incompetent Saviour, nor as a partial Saviour, but as a full and complete Saviour. You receive him with all the merits of his blood, with all the worth of his righteousness, with all the benefits of his intercession, with all the energy of his arm, with all the pity and tenderness of his heart. Your redemption, your conversion, your perseverance and your future glory were all counted in that complete computation made by the divine mind when your salvation was decided upon. Christ has been given you in answer to all this. "For it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." With

such a captain we shall be led on to a glorious victory. Then, since this sin occurs in a state of nature, it must be committed against the Holy Spirit only in his relation to impenitent sinners. What else, then, can this sin be but an obstinate resistance to those awakening and persuasive influences employed by the Spirit to lead souls to Christ for salvation?

HOW MAY THIS BECOME AN UNPARDONABLE OFFENSE?

This is easily explained. Christ will accept all who will come to him by repentance and faith. Grant us repentance and faith, and we will find in the Gospel forgiveness for the greatest sin in the catalogue of human transgression. But withhold repentance and faith, and we can find no forgiveness, not even for the most respectable sinner who struts about and plumes himself with all the vanity and assurance of a self-righteous pharisee. If a soul be finally lost, it will not be because there is a want of freeness and efficacy in the atonement of Christ, but because there is a want of disposition to secure an interest in its saving virtues. "*He will not,*" is declared of the sinner, not of Christ. Now, a disposition to secure salvation is not natural to a soul steeped in depravity. The corpse, cold, stiff and lifeless, is insensible to the wounds that sting, the joys that thrill, the motives that stir and the hopes that animate the living. Thrust into it a needle, and it will writhe in no agony. Throw before it gold, and crowns, and sceptres of royalty, and it will feel no motive to arise from the torpidness of death. So it is with the soul "dead in trespasses and in sins." Whatever argu-

ments will move those who are alive to their eternal interests will fall quite vapidly upon this soul. Then, the prerequisite steps to Christ depend for their existence upon divine influence. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Our Saviour says: "No man cometh unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." The Holy Spirit is the divine agent employed in drawing souls to Christ. He quickens the soul, awakens its powers, makes it sensible of its condition, and prepares it for the reception of the truth and promises of the Gospel. The wax that receives the impression must be softened, or the seal that is to impart the impression to the wax must be heated. The Spirit, however, does both. He both softens the heart and drives, red-hot, into it the truth as it is in Christ. But this, the greatest of all blessings, carries with it a most terrible danger, and may be turned into a calamity for which there is no remedy. If the Spirit should be so provoked as to leave the sinner, then he is irrevocably doomed—not because Christ rejects his plea, but because he presents no plea. Christ's complaint is still, "they will not come to me that they may have life;" but the terrible consequences of a settled opposition to the Spirit's persuasions are upon the poor abandoned soul, and he wills not, he repents not, he believes not. And are we creating a false alarm when we tell the incorrigible sinner that he is in imminent danger of bringing upon himself this deplorable crisis? Have we not already illustrated, by a very familiar analogy, how reasonably the Spirit may retire from his

breast? If the rejection of terms, and entreaties, and arguments, intended to effect a reconciliation between contending parties, will increase the turpitude of former enmity to wilful obstinacy, and may prevent a renewal of these conciliatory measures, then, why may not also the rejection of the persuasive appeals of the Gospel strengthen the guilt of the sinner's rebellion and weaken the impression of the Spirit's influence, until the one settles into a confirmed habit and the other dies out in a final retirement from the soul? This is the Unpardonable Sin. May the good Lord save us from such a calamity!

Hence this sin is not a single act of iniquity. As a fatal disease resulting from vice cannot be traced to a single instance of indiscretion, but to habits of dissipation inimical to the laws of health, so this sin is an accumulated offense culminating at last in the departure of the Spirit. Every sermon heard, but slighted, every conviction felt, but suppressed, and every adjournment of repentance to another season, will carry you nearer that awful point beyond which the wooing of the Spirit will never again be felt. The very sermon we are now sounding in your ears will either "be a savor of life unto life or a savor of death unto death."

We may also infer that this point may be reached many years before the abandoned soul enters eternity. As a man may live for weeks or months, though his lungs are almost consumed and the sentence of death is upon him, and as the criminal who has been convicted of murder may be held in durance a long time before he is executed, though he is

now legally dead—so the man from whose soul the Spirit has finally retired may be granted a long reprieve before he is summoned to appear before God in the other world. Such characters may be quite numerous, but we cannot detect anything about them sufficiently unusual to indicate their condition. You may meet them in your daily pursuits; you may mingle with them in the social circle; you may confer with them in your business engagements; you may solicit their advice in unexpected and dangerous emergencies; you may even sit with them in the sanctuary of the Lord and hear them complimenting the talent and culture of the man whose appeals from the sacred desk will never arouse them to action. Some of them may even exhibit those amiable, generous and attractive qualities of natural virtue which adorn human character and spread such a charm over society. But they are doomed! The sermons they hear, the funerals they attend, the afflictions they suffer and the bereavements which wring their hearts will never agitate their breasts, will never awaken a concern for their souls, and will never form in them a purpose to forsake sin, implore forgiveness and secure eternal life through the intercession of our Redeemer. I know not but that such characters are before me at present; I know not but that the very words I am now speaking are falling upon some ears as insipidly as an old worn-out song that can no longer enchant the heart with its melody.

SCRIPTURAL ILLUSTRATIONS.

And do not the Scriptures sustain this view of the unpardonable sin? Are we not exhorted to

quench not the Spirit, to provoke not the Spirit, to grieve not the Spirit? Is not the reason upon which these injunctions are based proclaimed by God, himself, when he says, "My spirit will not always strive with man?" Have we not many painful illustrations of the fatal consequences of God's spirit ceasing to act as our persuasive Monitor?

The inhabitants of the old world had been frequently impressed by the Spirit and admonished to forsin and embrace righteousness; but they "hardened their hearts and stiffened their necks;" they incurred the additional crime of *wilfully* defying their Maker whose patience finally became exhausted, and they were given over to destruction. When God closed the door of the ark behind Noah, he also closed against them the door of mercy. They had committed the unpardonable sin. Though for seven days nothing unusual was seen in nature, yet they were as certainly doomed as if, at that moment, the earth had opened and swallowed them up as victims of divine wrath.

The history of King Saul most radiantly exhibits the constituent elements of the unpardonable sin. He was deposed, not because of any gross outward offence against the divine law, but because of the "rebelliousness" and "stubbornness" of his heart. Samuel said to him, "because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king." He was rejected when the Spirit of God left him and David was anointed as his successor; and although he retained his kingdom for ten years (which circumstance is an illustration of the fact that the sinner may be abandoned a long time before death),

yet from this time his career was that of a God-forsaken monarch; his character was that of a man enslaved by jealousy, treachery and the most malignant and diabolical tempers of a depraved nature; and his history was that of a man "waxing worse and worse," which should be held up as a warning to us, "lest we also be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

David understood that the Spirit's departure was an irreversible calamity. When he became guilty of the most shocking crimes he did not deprecate the temporal judgments denounced against him, but he knew if the checks and guides of the Spirit should be removed, like Saul, he would run to ruin; hence he most touchingly prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, *and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*"

When our Saviour came near and beheld the city of Jerusalem, he wept over it, exclaiming: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." This is an affecting lamentation over an irrevocably doomed city. Though our Saviour uttered these pathetic words nearly forty years before the Roman army—God's agent of wrath—executed upon this city the sentence of ruin; and though he had sufficient compassion to prompt him to interpose in its behalf, and sufficient power to arrest the threatened judgment, yet so inexorable was the necessity arising from the administration of Jehovah that not even the pity of his heart nor the

energy of his arm could reverse the divine decree that consigned this city to destruction.

John says, "There is a sin unto death; I do not say that he shall pray for it." This is certainly a remarkable declaration, and probably illustrates more fully than any scriptural illustration I have yet made both the nature and the irreversible character of the unpardonable sin. The "sin unto death" relates to a death either corporal or spiritual and eternal. If we read the context,* in which we learn that the power of conferring eternal life is invested in the Son, and in which we are taught that believing and consistent prayer is the exercise through which we obtain, either for ourselves or others, the rich favors of God, it is certainly not reasonable to suppose that the apostle would so soon descend from his high contemplations, would so suddenly drop Jesus, the Giver of eternal life, would so unexpectedly transfer our thoughts from a superior to an inferior blessing, and would encourage a suppliant spirit with a motive of infinitely less value so soon after having dwelt with animation upon the most valuable bestowment of mercy, by teaching us that a continuance of mere temporal life will be given in answer to our intercession in behalf of an erring brother. This descent of thought from the most sublime display of divine love to a mere temporary privilege would be a very unusual and unaccountable reversion of feeling. And further, it is not reasonable to suppose that he would speak of the life given in answer to be-

*1 John v.

lieving prayer as a transferable blessing, as he does when he says, "he *shall give* him life for them that sin not unto death," if he simply meant the continuance of physical existence. Then the life of which he speaks is spiritual and eternal; and, therefore, the death mentioned in this relation is not capital punishment nor the melancholy results of sins which affect and destroy our physical energies, but is also spiritual and eternal. But what makes the distinction between "a sin not unto death" and "a sin unto death?" It is not the merit of sin, because all sins, by a legal sentence, are unto death. We are all rushing unto death, unless we have left this fatal road in quest of life. O, where is life? "God hath given us"—and here we may shout hallelujah!—"God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son, hath not life." Life and death are before us. The sins of those who go to Jesus are "not unto death," but the sins of those who will not go are "unto death." They are unto death because they are not washed away in the blood of the Lamb. It is not, then, the *nature* of our sins, but the *attitude* of our souls in relation to this "new and living way" that makes our salvation either a possible or an impossible thing. If this attitude is one of vigorous opposition to the way of life, carried on amid the struggles of an enlightened conscience, and subsiding at last in a fatal determination to remain in the way of death, then it becomes the "sin unto death." Then there is nothing very strange about this sin. It is simply an opposition to Christ, which finally

provokes the Spirit of grace to leave the sinner to his own choice, and permits him to have a free, unchecked passage down the road to hell. And here we come out again at the same point at which we came out in our other arguments. But the apostle further says, "I do not say that he shall pray for it." It is certainly our duty to pray for all whose salvation may be secured. Therefore, this release from the duty of making intercession for this sin implies the irrevocable nature of the doom it fastens upon the poor forsaken soul. When the physician, on leaving the room of his patient, shakes his head and says, "you need not give him any more medicine," then we have an evidence that he must die. But as we have not the gift of spiritual discernment, we must pray and preach at random, hoping that, while our supplications and entreaties may be as an old song to some, it will be a sweet savor of life to others.

Thus there is running through the entire Scriptures a well-defined principle, and if we bring this language of our Saviour to this touch-stone, then the sin against the Holy Ghost is a wilful and persistent opposition to his influence, culminating at last in the sinner's abandonment; but if we do not, then it is an unaccountable phenomenon of depravity, and well may we ask whether it comports with infinite wisdom to threaten us with a doom the cause of which is inexplicable.

CONCLUSION.

In concluding the discussion of this painful subject, my mind naturally adverts to three classes of persons who may now hear my voice—to the one, with most

tender sympathy ; to the other, with most profound regret ; and to the still other, with most earnest solicitude. O my poor distressed hearers, who are enslaved by a groundless fear of having incurred this sin, can you not obtain relief from this discourse ? From a wrong apprehension of this sin, you have become victims of a most acute and even morbid sensibility. The current of your existence, which should be peaceful and happy under the influence of the Gospel, is poisoned by a continually preying and malignant dread. You have probably selected from your past history a sin which you invest with all the terrors of an inextinguishable offense, and have too readily yielded to it the prerogatives of a foul spectre to haunt you through life. I deeply sympathize with you ; and a principal object of this discourse is to lead you by the hand out of the darkness, out of the thorns and briars, and out of the cold, dank malaria of this horrid place of despair, and to conduct you into a beautiful plain where you may bask in the sunlight of God's countenance, may pluck beautiful flowers of divine love, and may breathe the pure and enlivening atmosphere of a blessed assurance. Your fear arises from a mistrust of either the goodness or the sufficiency of Christ ; that is, you make Christ, instead of the Holy Spirit, the object of the unpardonable sin. Have we not already proven that this sin cannot be committed against the Son ? Have we not already told you that Christ is willing and able to wash away your sins, even though they be of the deepest dye ? Have you a tender conscience ? Do you regret your sins ? Do you desire more light,

more grace, more knowledge? Have you a relish for the laws, the ordinances and the sanctuary of God? Do you seek the sanctification of your hearts? Then you may be certain the Spirit has not left you. Your very dread of this sin implies a spiritual sensibility never felt by the abandoned soul.

But in adverting to those of you who are insensible to every persuasive appeal of the Gospel, I tremble to think that you will never be shaken out of your earthliness—that the Spiritual Dove, which so frequently visited your souls with the olive branch of peace, has finally flown back into his heavenly window, never, never again to visit your obdurate hearts. And what can I do for you? I may shed tears over you as our Saviour did over Jerusalem, but they can only be tears of hopeless regret. O, the saddest condition a man can be in on this side of hell is to sit under the Gospel with a dead, stupid, untouched heart. I must, therefore, leave you, to say something to those who may yet be reclaimed.

O my dear impenitent hearers who still feel the movements of the Spirit, I feel for you the deepest solicitude. I feel that I am speaking to persons who to-day may hear and obey, but to-morrow may be sunk in all the stupidity of death. Did you ever sit by the bedside of a dying relative and watch him as he was sinking into a coma—the forerunner of dissolution? Do you remember with what painful feelings you anticipated the event when he should lie breathing before you, but as insensible to surrounding objects as though he were lying cold in his coffin? Can you not recall the urgency with which you com-

municated to him a few important words before the flickering lamp of reason should be blown out? Then you have an idea of the solicitude I feel for you to-day. O, I urgently entreat you to "quench not the Spirit!" Stop now in your mad career! To-day, if you hear the voice of God, harden not your hearts by another moment's delay! I feel the importance of pressing you to an immediate decision to arise and go to Jesus. I am painfully aware I have no time to lose in admonishing you. I now see you sinking into a spiritual stupor, the shadow of perdition, which may be thrown over many years of your earthly existence, but in which you will be as insensible to the Spirit's suggestions as if you were sunk into the lowest depths of hell. O, the thought of being dead in life and amidst the light and privileges of the Gospel! "But Jesus will accept me at any time if I go to him." Aye, yes! *if* you go to him. The whole controversy turns on the word, *if*. If you go to him, he certainly will accept you. But are you so certain you will go to him? This you will not do unless the Spirit draw you. Can you not gather an intimation of your danger from this moment's experience? If your power of resistance is now sufficient to withstand the calls of grace, do you suppose you will be less fortified against the suggestions of the Spirit after your hearts have been encased in an iron obduracy accumulated from repeated refusals of salvation? It is a mercy that Christ died for you. It is a mercy that the divine Messenger admonishes you. Then your resistance closes for the present against your souls the only avenue of escape from

ruin. But further, if the gift of Christ, if the wooing of the Spirit are visitations of mercy, then your resistance is something more than mere refusal. It is a contempt of divine goodness—an ingratitude sufficiently base to provoke the heavenly Monitor to forsake you. Then you shall have forever closed against your souls the only avenue of escape. O, I insist upon an immediate acceptance of grace. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

THE END.

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